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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by Dr. Daniel McClure, American Legion national chaplain.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray together.

Our Heavenly Father, Creator and Sustainer of all that we are or will be, thank You for Your care in our daily national concerns. History has revealed Your hand in our national affairs and how much our lawmakers need Your wisdom, courage, and grace. We ask a special endowment of mental strength and physical endurance in these dangerous but exciting times. Grant them the insight to know the path to follow the road of righteousness and the ethics others can admire.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 26, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MARKEY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 333.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 333, H.R. 3979, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will be happy to yield to my friend, the senior Senator from Iowa.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. GRASSLEY. I appreciate the majority leader yielding.

It has been a tradition in the U.S. Senate—usually this time of the year, when various veterans organizations come to Washington, DC, to testify for their membership before Congress about issues dealing with the veterans of all of our wars—for a person who is chaplain to be guest Chaplain. This year it is my privilege that person for the American Legion be from the State of Iowa.

We have just heard Dr. Daniel A. McClure give his prayer this morning.

Dr. McClure is a veteran of over 40 years' military service with the U.S. Army, Army Reserve, Air Force and National Guard. He retired from the military in 2005. With Vietnam veteran status, he joined the American Legion in 2001 and has since served as post chaplain, district chaplain, department chaplain, oratorical contest judge, and district chairman of the Americanism Commission and Boys State counselor. He is a member of The American Legion Leon Beatty Post 29 in Washington, IA.

Dr. McClure was ordained by the Heritage Baptist Church, Lakeland, FL, in 1979 and has pastored churches in Washington State, Montana, Florida and Iowa. He earned his doctorate at Luther Rice Seminary, Lithonia, GA in 1993. Though he retired from formal duties in 1999, McClure continues to volunteer in all aspects of the ministry.

Dr. McClure currently serves his country and community in a number of capacities. He is president and treasurer of the All Veterans Association, treasurer of the House of Heroes, board chairman of the Tree of Life Free Clinic, a patron of NRA, past president of the local Community Chest, past president of Kiwanis, works with the Lake Darling Youth Center and is chairman of 1st Baptist Church's deacon board in Yarmouth, IA.

Dr. McClure and his wife Marge have been married 48 years, raising a son and a daughter. The McClures are now the grandparents of three boys and one girl.

I am glad to have the privilege of an Iowan serving as the national chaplain of a great veterans organization—the American Legion.

I thank the majority leader.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority the final half.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to executive session. At 11 a.m. there will be a series of votes on U.S. District Court judges. We will have four votes before lunch, and we will have four more votes, or thereabout, starting at 2:30 on confirmation of these nominations.

We will debate the Ukraine bill during today's session and vote on that legislation tomorrow.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2157

Mr. REID. Mr. President, S. 2157 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2157) to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare sustainable growth rate and to improve Medicare and Medicaid payments, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings at this time on this legislation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed upon the calendar.

UKRAINE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate took a step in the right direction yesterday. In response to Russia's destabilizing actions in Ukraine, my colleagues and I came to an agreement to vote on the bipartisan Senate foreign relations bill tomorrow. This important measure not only aids Ukraine but it also punishes President Putin and his cronies for their unlawful aggression. It also sends this message to the world: We, the American people, stand with Ukraine.

I was happy to hear yesterday the assistant Republican leader—the whip—the senior Senator from Texas, talk about the need to do more. And I agree; we need to do more. I, of course, was a fan—as was Senator MENENDEZ, the chair of the committee; the ranking member, Senator CORKER; and our senior policy mentor around here, Senator MCCAIN—of having IMF funding. So I hope we can move beyond what we are going to do tomorrow for the Ukrainian people. Based on what I heard on the Sunday shows, I believe we have bipartisan support to do more for Ukraine, so I invite my friend, the senior Senator from Texas, to work with Democrats to come up with a package of things we can do in the next few weeks to give the people of Ukraine the understanding and the basis for the fact that America will stand with them.

What President Putin did is wrong. It is a violation of international law. I think it is too bad he is homesick over the Soviet Union. He is one of the few who looks back with joy at what took place to build the Soviet Union. Tens of millions of Russians were killed—purposely—by the viciousness of the leaders prior to Putin. So let us hope he does not look back on all that as being good. We all know he was part of the KGB and we would hope he would

return to having Russia become a civilized nation rather than what the Soviet Union used to be.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. President, as the Senate finishes its work on the Ukrainian issue, we will soon have the opportunity to show millions of American families that we also stand by them. It is my sincere hope the bipartisan progress we have just made on the Ukraine legislation will also carry us over to work on unemployment insurance. Certainly we have a bipartisan bill that we have been working on for a long time.

President Lyndon Johnson once said:

The duty of government is to help people who are caught in the tentacles of circumstance.

That is certainly what we have in Nevada with 26,000 people. Around the country more than 2 million people are caught in the circumstance of having lost their job—usually these people are a little bit above 50—and because of the recession they can't find a job. So they need help, and that is what this legislation is all about.

In our country today you will find no greater example of people at the mercy of unfortunate circumstances than the long-term unemployed. In the 3 months since the Republicans first filibustered a bill to restore emergency benefits, more than 1 million Americans have lost their benefits. Considering that in the time that was wasted by our Republican filibuster, almost 1 million people in America, in dire need of help, have been told that no help is coming, we are here to deliver a message on a bipartisan basis that help is coming. For people who have worked hard all their lives, worrying about how to pay their rent, put gas in the car, and buy groceries while they search for a new job can be demoralizing, especially when they see nothing good over the horizon. For the long-term unemployed, losing a \$300-per-week employment benefit can be the difference between keeping a roof over their children's heads and, as we have heard—because I have read into the record on a number of occasions letters from Nevadans saying they are going to become homeless—going out of business as a family, literally.

Here is what one Nevada man wrote to me this month as he begged us to act. His wife had been out of work for months. With resources scarce, the family will be forced to choose between paying their rent or paying for cancer treatments for their 2-year-old son. But here is what he wrote:

We keep praying you will do everything in your power to bring back emergency benefits to help us in our most difficult time.

This man, and millions of Americans just like him, have waited too long for action. But the Senate has another opportunity to do our job and help those struggling Americans. In the upcoming days the Senate will consider an agreement, negotiated in good faith by a bipartisan group of Senators, including my colleague from Nevada Senator

HELLER. This agreement will restore benefits to millions of long-term unemployed Americans looking for work.

I urge all my colleagues to put philosophical differences aside and help struggling families get the support they need and deserve. All we have to do is work together, Democrats and Republicans, to do what is right for our constituents in their hour of need.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO ROCHELLE EUBANKS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, here on the Senate floor we often speak about numbers of great magnitude. Whether we are speaking of the national debt, jobs, or tax dollars, the numbers can be in the thousands, millions, or even billions. Sometimes these numbers are enough to numb even the most policy minded to the sheer volume and amount of people and resources that go into running the Nation's Capital City.

Today, as I bid farewell to Rochelle Eubanks, a diligent, beloved, and loyal staffer for 25 years, there is one number in particular I want to bring to my colleagues' attention. That number is 1,807,181.

For a quarter of a century, Rochelle has been the backbone of my office, in charge of the one critical task that all of us honored enough to be elected to Congress are charged with: to listen, to respond to, and to act on behalf of our constituents.

First as my correspondence mail system, or CMS, operator; and since 1994, as my CMS production manager, Rochelle has been at the front lines of communicating with Kentuckians. CMS is the computerized system Senate offices use to keep track of their letters to constituents. And that number—1,807,181—is the number of letters to the Bluegrass State Rochelle has sent out in her 25 years of service.

It is truly remarkable. If every letter were to go to a different person, then Rochelle has mailed a letter to nearly half the State. No one else on my staff has had more contact with the voters back home than she has. After her retirement on April 4, she will be very much missed by myself and by all of her colleagues in my office.

Rochelle started back in March of 1989. But her Senate service extends back to April of 1982, when she began work as a mail manager for the Republican Conference. She also worked with Senators John East and Jim Broyhill, both of North Carolina, before moving to the House side in 1987. I am very glad we were able to lure her back over to the Senate side to work in my office beginning in 1989.

Most staff offices have two or three staffers working on CMS. But for the majority of her tenure with my office, Rochelle has handled CMS duties on her own. How in the world does she do it? Well, "I just do what I do," Rochelle says, in her usual modest fashion. Perhaps the key to how she does it

is that Rochelle is always the first to arrive in the office, often by 5:30 in the morning. I know for a fact Rochelle can be counted on as the first to arrive at work, because I can recall a time or two when she had to let me in my own office.

I knew I could always count on, as I have called her, the early bird. In fact, that is how I introduced Rochelle to my wife Elaine: This is my early bird. Rochelle could always be counted on to be there.

Because of her long tenure, Rochelle has become almost a den mother of sorts to many of the younger staff members and interns in my office. Rochelle has been with us in three different office locations, all in the Russell Building, and every time her desk has been located near the mailroom and the office interns.

When new interns or mailroom staffers start their first day, they already know who is looking out for them. "You must be Rochelle," many have been heard to say. "I've heard so much about you."

One of my longtime staffers who worked with Rochelle for nearly 20 years remembers her fondly.

She interacted with me the same day I came as a staff assistant, to the day I left as chief of staff. It was the same way she treated everybody. It didn't matter if you were a senator or an intern. She was always sweet and pleasant and positive.

Another longtime staffer recalls:

Rochelle has long been the master of mass mail. Regardless of how many bins I brought her, she always had a bright smile, a kind word, a listening ear, and a delightful laugh. All the things that make a colleague a dear friend—that's what Rochelle is truly the master of.

Yet another former longtime time staffer says in tribute to her:

Rochelle . . . you were always the sounding board, the moral compass and the reality check for the people you worked with, some of whom you may have forgotten, but who will always count you as a friend. And while your work over the years was excellent, please know that those you have worked with will remember you for much more.

The fidelity and loyalty Rochelle has shown to my office is exceeded only by her fidelity and loyalty to her family. Rochelle has two daughters: Rochelle and Endyia, and six granddaughters: Nyla, Jermany, Albany, Liberti, Milini, and little Marlei, who was born just this March 9.

Everyone in the office knows how cute Rochelle's granddaughters are because she proudly displays several pictures of them at her desk. Some former staffers recall years ago when Rochelle would occasionally bring her then-school-aged daughters into the office and they would show off their cartwheels. The tradition continues today with Rochelle's granddaughters. "Granny, can we come work with you?" they ask.

Family is also the reason that after 25 years, Rochelle is taking her well-earned retirement and moving into the next phase of her life. I was thrilled to

learn Rochelle will be marrying her fiancé Kevin Perry. They will soon be moving to New York. Of course, she will be missed by her family here in the District as well as by everyone in the McConnell office, but our loss is Mr. Perry's gain, and I wish the two of them great happiness in their marriage.

Kevin is a professional musician who plays the guitar, and his genre of choice is R&B and funk music. He and Rochelle have known each other since high school and after 30 years recently reconnected. Now they are back in each other's lives and looking forward to starting a new life in Queens—"not Manhattan," as Rochelle is quick to point out.

Rochelle is a native Washingtonian, and of course Rochelle's daughters, granddaughters, and other family here will miss her terribly, but Rochelle is reassuring. "I'm only 4 hours away. And we'll do a lot of Skype," she says. "They don't want me to stop [working] and they don't want me to leave DC. But I'm ready for a change."

Quite a change it will be. It is hard to imagine the McConnell office without Rochelle. She is the fourth longest serving staffer in the history of my office. When she retires next Friday, she will have 9,140 days of continuous service. In fact, the three longest serving staffers still in my office are all women who have more than 25 years of service each; field assistant Sue Tharp, archivist Nan Mosher, and Rochelle.

For Rochelle it all comes down to family—her own family and the McConnell family which she has formed and grown close to in her time with us. So it is fitting that she is retiring to start a new chapter with her family.

"It's a very close-knit office," Rochelle says of her tenure. "Everybody cares. Everybody helps each other out." I am glad Rochelle feels that way, and I couldn't agree more.

Another longtime staffer and longtime friend of Rochelle's sums up the special place she holds in our hearts this way:

For Rochelle, it comes down to family. To her, that's the unifier. My nephew is 20 years old; she still asks what he's up to. She's that way with everybody. She's the glue.

Now the McConnell office is going to have to soldier on without the vital glue Rochelle Eubanks has provided for 25 years. It is a great loss not only for us but for the people of Kentucky—for all of my constituents she reached out to, for the recipients of 1,807,181 letters, each letter representing a vital link between them and their elected representative.

So farewell, Rochelle, my friend, and thank you ever so much for two and one-half decades of tireless service. It is going to be a very different office without your welcoming smile and easy laugh.

Congratulations and best wishes on your marriage and the wonderful new life you will begin with your husband. You certainly deserve every happiness.

It would be such a remarkable turn of events and a genuine pleasure to receive a letter from you for a change. I would even settle for a postcard. I hope you will send us one from New York.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, I wish to start by acknowledging the majority leader's decision to remove extraneous IMF provisions from the Ukraine bill. As I noted yesterday, no legislation could have passed with those provisions included. So I think it is a positive step forward. We are glad he took our advice, and now Congress will be able to pass an effective bill on Ukraine very soon.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. President, President Obama and his Washington Democratic allies are well into their sixth year of presiding over our economy. Yet the jobs recovery they keep promising us just never seems to materialize.

We have to give Washington Democrats at least some credit though. They have tried regulating, taxing, spending, stimulating, just about everything their ideology will allow. The problem is their ideology just simply doesn't work. Many of their policies just end up making things worse. Of course, the best example is ObamaCare.

They promised the Sun and the Moon to sell this thing. They said it would create jobs. They also said it would improve the economy, lower premiums, insure the uninsured, without causing Americans to lose their insurance, their doctors or their hospitals—the kind of claims which would have made Billy Mays blush.

But now Americans know better. Evidence shows that not only will ObamaCare encourage less job creation, but it is also making the economy worse, that it is driving premiums higher, and it will not come anywhere near insuring all the uninsured, while causing millions of Americans to lose the insurance and the doctors they were promised they could keep.

It is also a law which is unraveling before our very eyes. As we read this week, the administration has now handed out so many waivers, special favors, and exemptions to help out Democrats politically that the heart of the law—the individual mandate—may actually no longer even be viable. It has basically become the legal equivalent of Swiss cheese.

There is a broader point. If Washington Democrats think ObamaCare is so bad they need to exempt that many people from its mandates, then why shouldn't we remove the hardship for everyone? Doesn't the middle class deserve a break too?

Why shouldn't we repeal the 30-hour workweek created by ObamaCare, the provision which reduces take-home pay for the middle class.

Why shouldn't we do away with ObamaCare's job-killing medical device tax, something even many Democrats would vote to abolish if the majority leader would allow the vote.

What I am saying is if Washington Democrats are actually serious about

job creation, then it is time to actually show it. Work with us to eliminate the things that hurt jobs, that hold Americans back from a real recovery—such as these job-killing ObamaCare mandates—and work with us to enact things which can actually create jobs.

Approving the Keystone Pipeline would create thousands of jobs right away. Passing trade legislation—legislation President Obama has already endorsed—would help create even more, but Washington Democrats need to work collaboratively with us to make those things happen. Yet this morning's New York Times highlights their strategy for the rest of the year. Here it is summed up in three words, "political show votes."

Get this. Their plan is not to pass legislation but to time show votes to "coincide with campaign-style trips by President Obama." Rather than take up House-passed jobs bills which would actually help middle-class Americans, they plan for yet another year of turning the Senate floor into a campaign studio.

I am asking Washington Democrats to put the ideology and political show votes aside for once and finally join us, join us to give the American people what they have been asking for all along—more jobs, more opportunity, and an economy which works for the middle class once again.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half.

The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, this past Sunday was the fourth anniversary of President Obama's health care law.

Four years ago Democrats in Washington were confident the law they forced through Congress would be extremely popular today. Instead, the law has broken almost every significant promise President Obama made about the law itself, and Americans regrettably have been left to deal with the consequences.

The actual law doesn't even look the same as it did 4 years ago because President Obama has lawlessly rewritten so much of it. Last night word leaked about the latest change. Now the administration is getting rid of the March 31 deadline for some people to

sign up for insurance in the government exchange.

According to this morning's Washington Post, if people just check a box on the Web site saying they are having trouble signing up, they will get an extension until at least mid-April—and I wouldn't be surprised if another extension after that and then again beyond.

Remember, the Obama administration said 7 million people would have to sign up by March 31 in order for this open enrollment period to be a success. Those are the administration's words. But with less than 1 week to go, they are 2 million short of their goal. That is why they are allowing this extension because they are in a panic, a panic not enough people are signing up.

The White House may come out and say they have come close to their 7 million target. They may even claim they were somehow able to find all of the 2 million people they needed to buy insurance on the exchanges, but looking at some of the dubious numbers the administration has released so far, we can predict there will be many unanswered questions about the numbers—whatever numbers the White House claims to now be the new numbers.

The first question we should ask about the numbers is, how many of the people signing up actually have insurance?

Apparently, it doesn't seem to matter much to the administration how many people who go to the Web site actually have insurance. The Obama administration released a report showing how many people went through the signup process on the Web site through the exchanges. Those people don't actually have insurance until they write a check, pay their premiums, and make sure they do have insurance.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius said recently she had no idea in the world—no idea at all—about how many people had paid and how many had not paid, and she is the President's Secretary of Health and Human Services—no idea.

Insurance companies say they have given Washington plenty of information to know the answer to that question, but the person in charge has no idea.

One industry official told Politico:

If they have not processed those yet and compiled the data, that is a choice they are making. But they have that data now.

The White House can say whatever they want—and they tend to do that—but they have the data. They are not admitting the truth.

Why isn't the administration playing it straight with these numbers? The point of ObamaCare was to get people insurance, not just register them on a Web site. A recent survey by McKinsey & Company found that only 53 percent of the previously uninsured people who had selected a plan actually then went and paid the first month's premium. So only about half of the people that didn't have insurance before, who signed up on the Web site, actually

went to pay for and buy the insurance. That is question number one.

Question No. 2 is: How many people are newly insured? That was the major goal of the Obama health care legislation. Washington Democrats said time and time again that we needed a massive overall of the entire health care system of this country in order to cover the uninsured. Many of the people who are signing up today and people who have signed up are doing so because the insurance they had, that they liked, that worked for them, that they could afford, under the health care law was canceled. The President's health care law forced them to switch.

How many people? We don't know that either. One Health and Human Services official admitted as much. He said: "That is not a data point that we are really collecting in any sort of systemic way."

The government officials overseeing this part of the Web site are not even collecting the data. The goal of the whole policy plan was to get people that didn't have insurance on insurance. They are not collecting that data point at all. It turns out that the paper application for ObamaCare included a question—reasonably so—as to whether that person already had insurance because it is information we want to know. But the bureaucrats and the contractors who were apparently overseen by the President of the United States, who created the healthcare.gov Web site—the Web site that the President said was going to be easier to use than Amazon for insurance and cheaper than your cell phone bill—apparently they just dropped the question. Why did they do that? Why did they drop the question that was on the paper form and leave it off of the Web site to ask if somebody had actually had insurance before? That is what they did.

Isn't it something the Obama administration would want to know if they wanted to be honest with the American people. The best estimate has been from this McKinsey survey. They figure that by early February only about a quarter of the people who signed up for ObamaCare insurance were actually newly insured. Three-fourths of them were just changing out insurance, many of whom had their insurance canceled. If that number holds, the exchanges might end up covering fewer than 2 million previously uninsured Americans this year—fewer than 2 million people who didn't have insurance before covered on the exchange. Think about how much simpler, how much more cost effective health care could have been while still covering that same number of people.

Here is the third important question. Who exactly is signing up? The administration is pushing young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 to buy insurance. It is not happening the way the administration wants it to happen. Through February, less than 10 percent—less than 1 in 10—of the young adults who potentially could enroll

have actually done so. Insurance companies need lots of young, healthy people to pay premiums—to pay for premiums and then not use much care in return. That is the only way this works. Unless more of those young people sign up by the beginning of next week, theoretically—now extended by checking a box—premiums are going to jump.

Here is the final question. When people buy insurance through the ObamaCare exchanges, what kind of care will it provide? Just remember what the President said: If you like what you have, you could keep it; you could keep your doctor—easier than Amazon and cheaper than your cell phone. People are losing access to doctors they have known and trusted for years. We have heard from people around the country that this has happened. But for some people having a doctor won't mean they can actually see the doctor. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, we are facing a shortage of about 90,000 physicians by the end of this decade.

Some patients may be able to get to see a doctor but maybe not the one they need. According to an Associated Press survey that was reported last week, only 4 of 19 leading cancer hospitals—only 4 of 19 leading cancer hospitals—said that they accept the plans from all the insurance companies in their State's exchanges. For many other patients, the doctor is going to be spending more time looking at the computer instead of looking at them, even though they are in the same office together because of the burdensome new rules and recordkeeping requirements in the law. Maybe you can keep your doctor, maybe you cannot. Do you need special cancer care? Are you worried about whether you are going to be able to get that, and is the doctor going to be able to look at you and interact or is the doctor going to be staring at his computer screen instead of you in the limited time they have because of the burdensome requirements? It is going to be bad for patients.

So patients are going to be getting less care and many will be paying a lot more than they were paying before. Secretary Sebelius finally conceded that the rates will continue to rise in 2015. Now The Hill newspaper that is around—this is what they said on Wednesday, March 19: "ObamaCare premiums are about to skyrocket."

The President said: cheaper than your cell phone. Reuters ran a headline that said: "Insurers see double-digit Obamacare price rises in many states next year." Bloomberg's headline yesterday was almost the same: "Obamacare insurer WellPoint Sees Double-Digit Rate Rise."

The President said recently the law "is working the way it should." The President of the United States looked into the camera and said it is working the way it should. What does he think of the people who are on the other side

watching him on TV? Does he realize how he is losing credibility with the American people when he makes blatant statements like that, when they see how poorly it is working?

I believe the President has no idea how the law is working, how poorly it is working or what is going to happen next. Does he really think the law is working or is it just a line that somebody wrote for him and that he read? It is hard to know. Does he think that double-digit premium increases are a sign that the law is working? I heard from one of my constituents the other day, as we were away for the week talking to people around Wyoming, and he put it in writing. He is from western Wyoming. He said:

Senator Barrasso, I am sorry for the snide subject of our e-mail but the truth hurts. I know I am preaching to the choir but I just wanted to share our story and frustration.

Now I know the majority leader has been to the floor and said all of these stories that we tell are all lies. This is a person who lives in Wyoming. This is what is happening in that person's life. He said:

We have finally just finished applying for health care through the exchange and found out that our health insurance will double if we sign up. Fortunately for us, we are covered under our own insurance until this December. Our current plan is \$505 a month, and it has a \$15 thousand deductible after which it is an 80/20 split. The rub for us is the following:

Under the construct of the subsidy plan we would theoretically qualify, based on our family size (5 girls) and our income. But since my employer offers health insurance for me and my family, we don't qualify. So we are stuck in limbo. Nonetheless, if we go on my employer's health insurance, we will be paying over \$1000 more each month. If we go on the health care market place plan, the least expensive is \$1,054/month. This is a significant increase for our middle class family.

I thought the affordable health care act was supposed to help us not hurt us.

The affordable health care act was supposed to help us, he said, not hurt us.

We are panicked on how we are going to pay for this in December? We will be taking all of the money that was going into savings to pay for a terrible insurance plan. Please help us and share our story with people who say this act is helping the middle class.

I wish the majority leader were here to hear this. Please share this story—our story—a true story about a family in Wyoming, with those who say the act is helping the middle class.

Madam President, it clearly is not. Does it sound like the law is working for this man and his family? President Obama says it is working just the way it is supposed to work. It is not working for this man and his family.

Our health care system needed reform. It needs it now more than ever. We all know that. What Americans got with the Obama health care law was a monstrous new bureaucracy. It is raising costs for millions of people. It is leading to worse care and other unintended consequences. Now these questions are just a small part of what the American people want to know.

In fact, as of last night, I can think of another question. How does the Obama administration define the word deadline? Kathleen Sebelius in the House the other day said the deadline is March 31. We are not going to extend it. We are not under any circumstances going to extend it. The White House press secretary said the same. Are there any deadlines at all for anything in this administration? Is it all on the honor system?

As we start to get answers to these questions, we are going to see even more clearly that this health care law has failed patients, it has failed health care providers, and it has failed taxpayers. The President needs to admit that his law is not working. He needs to accept Republican ideas to replace it. Americans need better access to quality, affordable health care, not just broken promises, tired excuses, and unanswered questions.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mrs. MURRAY pertaining to the introduction of S. 2162 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to Rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Christopher Reid Cooper, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow, Robert Menendez, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Carl Levin, Bernard Sanders, Joe Donnelly, Maria Cantwell, Barbara A. Mikulski, Tom Harkin, Tim Kaine, Jeanne Shaheen, Jon Tester.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Christopher Reid Cooper, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 56, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 80 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Baldwin	Harkin	Murray
Begich	Heinrich	Nelson
Bennet	Heitkamp	Pryor
Blumenthal	Hirono	Reed
Booker	Johnson (SD)	Reid
Boxer	Kaine	Rockefeller
Brown	King	Sanders
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schatz
Cardin	Landrieu	Schumer
Carper	Leahy	Shaheen
Casey	Levin	Stabenow
Collins	Manchin	Tester
Coons	Markey	Udall (CO)
Donnelly	McCaskill	Udall (NM)
Durbin	Menendez	Walsh
Feinstein	Merkley	Warren
Franken	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murkowski	Wyden
Hagan	Murphy	

NAYS—43

Alexander	Fischer	Moran
Ayotte	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blunt	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Hatch	Roberts
Burr	Heller	Rubio
Chambliss	Hoeven	Scott
Coats	Inhofe	Sessions
Coburn	Isakson	Shelby
Cochran	Johanns	Thune
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
Cornyn	Kirk	Vitter
Crapo	Lee	Wicker
Cruz	McCain	
Enzi	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—1

Warner

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 56, the nays are 43.

The motion to invoke cloture is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of M. Douglas Harpool, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Missouri.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow, Robert Menendez, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, Richard

Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Carl Levin, Bernard Sanders, Joe Donnelly, Maria Cantwell, Barbara A. Mikulski, Tom Harkin, Tim Kaine, Jeanne Shaheen, Jon Tester.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I yield back all time on the next three nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call is waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Douglas Harpool, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Missouri, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 56, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 81 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Baldwin	Harkin	Murray
Begich	Heinrich	Nelson
Bennet	Heitkamp	Pryor
Blumenthal	Hirono	Reed
Booker	Johnson (SD)	Reid
Boxer	Kaine	Rockefeller
Brown	King	Sanders
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schatz
Cardin	Landrieu	Schumer
Carper	Leahy	Shaheen
Casey	Levin	Stabenow
Collins	Manchin	Tester
Coons	Markey	Udall (CO)
Donnelly	McCaskill	Udall (NM)
Durbin	Menendez	Walsh
Feinstein	Merkley	Warren
Franken	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murkowski	Wyden
Hagan	Murphy	

NAYS—43

Alexander	Fischer	Moran
Ayotte	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blunt	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Hatch	Roberts
Burr	Heller	Rubio
Chambliss	Hoeven	Scott
Coats	Inhofe	Sessions
Coburn	Isakson	Shelby
Cochran	Johanns	Thune
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
Cornyn	Kirk	Vitter
Crapo	Lee	Wicker
Cruz	McCain	
Enzi	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—1

Warner

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 56 and the nays are 43.

The motion is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Gerald Austin McHugh, Jr., of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow, Robert Menendez, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Carl Levin, Bernard Sanders, Joe Donnelly, Maria Cantwell, Barbara A. Mikulski, Tom Harkin, Tim Kaine, Jeanne Shaheen, Jon Tester.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Gerald Austin McHugh, Jr., of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 56, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 82 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Ayotte	Hagan	Murray
Baldwin	Harkin	Nelson
Begich	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Heitkamp	Reid
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rockefeller
Booker	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Boxer	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Levin	Tester
Casey	Manchin	Toomey
Collins	Markey	Udall (CO)
Coons	McCaskill	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Menendez	Walsh
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Feinstein	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Franken	Murkowski	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murphy	

NAYS—43

Alexander	Flake	Moran
Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Blunt	Grassley	Portman
Boozman	Hatch	Pryor
Burr	Heller	Risch
Chambliss	Hoeven	Roberts
Coats	Inhofe	Rubio
Coburn	Isakson	Scott
Cochran	Johanns	Sessions
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Cornyn	Kirk	Thune
Crapo	Landrieu	Vitter
Cruz	Lee	Wicker
Enzi	McCain	
Fischer	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—1

Warner

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 56, the nays are 43.

The motion to invoke cloture is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the

Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of M. Edward G. Smith, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow, Robert Menendez, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Carl Levin, Bernard Sanders, Joe Donnelly, Maria Cantwell, Barbara A. Mikulski, Tom Harkin, Tim Kaine, Jeanne Shaheen, Jon Tester.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Edward G. Smith, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 75, nays 23, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 83 Ex.]

YEAS—75

Alexander	Franken	Murkowski
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murphy
Baldwin	Graham	Murray
Barrasso	Hagan	Nelson
Begich	Harkin	Portman
Bennet	Hatch	Pryor
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Reed
Booker	Heitkamp	Reid
Boozman	Hirono	Roberts
Boxer	Hoeben	Rockefeller
Brown	Isakson	Rubio
Cantwell	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Cardin	Kaine	Schatz
Carper	King	Schumer
Casey	Klobuchar	Scott
Coburn	Leahy	Stabenow
Cochran	Levin	Tester
Collins	Manchin	Toomey
Coons	Markey	Udall (CO)
Cornyn	McCain	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	McCaskill	Walsh
Durbin	McConnell	Warren
Enzi	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wicker
Flake	Mikulski	Wyden

NAYS—23

Blunt	Grassley	Paul
Burr	Heller	Risch
Chambliss	Inhofe	Sessions
Coats	Johanns	Shaheen
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Crapo	Kirk	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Vitter
Fischer	Moran	

NOT VOTING—2

Landrieu	Warner
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 75, the nays are 23.

The motion is agreed to.

NOMINATION OF CHRISTOPHER REID COOPER TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

NOMINATION OF M. DOUGLAS HARPOOL TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

NOMINATION OF GERALD AUSTIN MCHUGH, JR., TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

NOMINATION OF EDWARD G. SMITH, TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked, the clerk will report the nominations.

The assistant bill clerk read the nominations of Christopher Reid Cooper, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia; M. Douglas Harpool, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Missouri; Gerald Austin McHugh, Jr., of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania; and Edward G. Smith, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2:30 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Republican whip.

BETTER FOCUS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I wish to say a few words about the business pending before the Senate; that is, providing aid and assistance to the citizens of Ukraine who find themselves invaded by the Russian federation. But before I get to Ukraine, I wish to say a quick word about a story that appeared today in the New York Times.

This was a remarkable story, remarkable in its transparency but also in its cynicism in terms of what some of our friends across the aisle have in mind between now and November. To put it in a word, they have given up. They have given up legislating and are going to spend the next several months holding a series of show votes which are in essence those designed to highlight poll-tested messages.

The New York Times writes this:

The proposals have little chance of passing.

Little chance of passing.

But Democrats concede that making new laws is not really the point. Rather, they are trying to force Republicans to vote against them.

I would think the American people would expect and certainly they would

deserve better than that from the Senate—scheduling a series of show votes, not for the purpose of actually improving the lives of the American people or solving the problems that confront our country at this time of low economic growth and high joblessness but, rather, for show votes, for purely partisan political reasons.

At a time when millions of people have lost their health insurance, when millions have been forced to pay higher premiums or deductibles, when 3.8 million people have been unemployed for more than 6 months, when the labor force participation rate—the number of people actually looking for work—has fallen to 30-year lows, and when nearly 46.8 million people are receiving food stamps, it is more than a little disappointing that the leaders of the Democratic Party in the Senate are into scoring cheap political points.

As I said, the American people certainly deserve better. Again, I am a little bit surprised that some of the leadership on the Democratic side of the aisle would be so transparent and so obvious as to state their intentions to the New York Times, but that is what it appears.

What we need is a Senate and a Congress that is more focused on creating an economic condition where the American people can find jobs rather than politicians who are focused solely on saving their jobs, particularly leading up to the next election. Of course, this is the kind of stuff that makes people extraordinarily cynical about Washington, DC, but with an election coming up, I guess some people have lost all sense of proportion.

UKRAINE

As we continue to discuss the proper response by the United States of America to Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, it is important that we stay focused on two overarching realities; No. 1, the Government of Russia is much more vulnerable to Western pressure than it might appear from the outside; No. 2, we have far more leverage today against Moscow than we did 10 years ago or even 5 years ago because of the renaissance in American energy, the oil and gas boom we are experiencing in America, thanks to the discovery of a man named George Mitchell from Houston, TX, who pioneered horizontal drilling, which together with fracking has allowed access to natural gas and oil reserves undreamed of just 5 or 10 years ago.

Let's start with the first reality. As Ruchir Sharma of Morgan Stanley Investment Management wrote on Monday in the Wall Street Journal:

Russia has become a classic weak-investments, high-inflation economy.

An economy plagued by massive levels of corruption.

According to Mr. Sharma:

... wealthy Russians have been moving money out of the country at one of the fastest rates in two decades—\$60 billion a year since 2012—and now foreign investors are pulling out too.

So it is worth noting that Russia's economy is currently suffering through a period of stagnation, despite the fact that oil prices remain high. As a matter of fact, its government's main source of income is oil and gas revenue, which has led our friend the senior Senator from Arizona to say that Russia these days is "a gas station masquerading as a sovereign state."

They depend on the ability to sell that oil and gas to Ukraine and Europe. Indeed, they use this as a political tool to work their will in Europe and obviously in Ukraine.

Sometimes we talk about crony capitalism here in America in which private individuals and private companies collude with government in order to gain special benefits. That is what crony capitalism is. The Russian economy represents crony capitalism on steroids. If we could squeeze the oligarchs and the Kremlin advisers who have gotten fabulously rich thanks to their collaboration with Vladimir Putin and the Russian Government, many of Vladimir Putin's closest allies will begin to rethink their support. That is an area of vulnerability we ought to be focused on like a laser.

As I said yesterday, I am encouraged by the sanctions the Obama administration announced on Thursday. It is a good start, but I would urge the administration to continue imposing serious penalties on high-level Kremlin officials and the super-rich oligarchs who comprise Putin's inner circle. In other words, sanctions are not enough. We need to do more to dissuade and discourage Putin and his allies from engaging in the current course of conduct, as well as further adventures in other parts of Europe and areas of the former Soviet Union.

It is time for more robust sanctions that target the financial energy sectors of the Russian economy. The cost for Moscow's aggression must be real, and that is not just me saying that, that is what President Obama said too. With that in mind, I urge the administration to sanction the Russian arms exporter known as Rosoboroneexport, which has been tied up in all sorts of corruption scandals and which is also the primary arms supplier for Bashar al-Assad in Syria, who has murdered about 150,000 of his own people in the ongoing Syrian civil war.

I cosponsored an amendment introduced by the Senator from Indiana that would end all U.S. Government contracts with Rosoboroneexport and punish the companies with whom it does military-related business. Once again, I hope that the majority leader, Senator REID, would reconsider and allow the amendment to receive a vote, something he refused to do yesterday. I am hoping after a good night's sleep and reconsideration, maybe he would be open to that.

I would also call on the majority leader, Senator REID, to allow us to offer another amendment introduced by the junior Senator from Wyoming,

which would greatly expand American exports of liquefied natural gas by granting automatic approval to all applications for new LNG terminals that would ship gas to Ukraine and other members of our NATO alliance.

One may wonder why that is necessary. Just to recapitulate, Putin uses energy as a weapon. If he is not getting what he wants out of Ukraine or Europe, he squeezes off the supply of energy which is essential to the economy and to life itself in those vulnerable parts of the world.

We have been blessed as a result of the innovations of people such as George Mitchell with this new renaissance in energy in America through shale gas—sometimes called unconventional plays—but the point is we are now able to produce much more energy than we can consume domestically, and in North America alone we are fast approaching energy independence. We can afford to be an exporter of some of this energy to vulnerable countries such as Ukraine and Europe, so we can get Putin's boot off their neck when it comes to the impact he has on their energy supply.

Before the shale gas revolution, which has just been in the last decade or so, there was very little the United States could do to deter Eastern Europe's dependence on Russia's LNG. The global energy landscape is much different than it was just a half decade ago.

Back in October the House Energy & Commerce Committee held a hearing at which several Eastern European diplomats discussed the geopolitical significance of America's natural gas boom. The Lithuanian Ambassador said bluntly: "We need your gas. We want to buy your gas." Well, Lithuania is one of the countries that are in the greatest jeopardy now against the depredations of somebody like Vladimir Putin and a Russian Federation on the march.

Meanwhile, the Czech Republic's Deputy Chief of Mission said that U.S. LNG exports would increase his country's leverage in future energy negotiations with Moscow. This same Czech diplomat has also urged the U.S. Government to treat LNG exports to NATO countries the same way it treats LNG exports to countries with which America has a free-trade agreement. This is how he put it: Such a policy shift "puts us in a different league. We are in League B and we would like to be in League A."

Passing the Barrasso amendment, of which I am a proud cosponsor, would put all NATO countries in league A, and it would send an unmistakable message to Vladimir Putin and his allies in this aggression against the people of Ukraine and potential aggression against other countries that this weapon he uses, known as energy, is no longer available to him to use to intimidate people and gain their territorial ambitions.

It would also demonstrate that Members of both political parties here in

Congress are committed to breaking Vladimir Putin's energy stranglehold over the nations of Eastern Europe. This is going to be very important because if Putin keeps coming—as he may very well do—and as Europe considers working with the United States to impose higher and higher costs, Europe is going to look in the mirror and say: What do sanctions against Russia mean in terms of our economy?

I am afraid they are going to be compromised if they realize their engagement with us—and increasingly high sanctions against Russia—has a negative impact on their economy because it will essentially jeopardize their energy imports.

In addition to sanctions and gas exports, the third prong of America's Ukraine strategy should include serious military assistance to Kiev. Everyone has said: We are not talking about American boots on the ground, but we are talking about providing military assistance to people who are trying to defend themselves.

If our alliance and agreement with Ukraine means anything, it means we are going to help them defend themselves against Russian depredation.

Believe me, not only is Ukraine watching but other nations, such as NATO—which has a treaty relationship with the United States and a self-defense agreement in section 5 of the NATO treaty where aggression against any single NATO country is treated as an attack against all of them—are watching America's response in Ukraine.

In some cases, America might not have to send that military aid directly. We might only have to facilitate the purchase of certain equipment from other sources. But either way, we should be doing everything possible to make sure our friends and our allies have the resources they need to deter Russian aggression further.

It is not just our enemies who are looking to see if America retreats—pulling back in the world and creating a vacuum that is being filled by people like Vladimir Putin—it is our friends and our allies who are wondering if America is a dependable friend and ally. If we are not, they are going to make other arrangements all around the world.

I have a few final words about what is at stake.

When Ukraine voluntarily gave up its nuclear arsenal in the mid-1990s, it did so after receiving a U.S. security guarantee. When other Eastern European nations decided to join NATO, they too were seeking a guarantee from America that we would come to their defense and other NATO allies would also come to their defense.

If Russia's annexation of Crimea is allowed to stand, many of our allies, our partners, and our friends will no longer trust American promises, and many would-be aggressors, such as China, will be emboldened to pursue their territorial claims with much

more belligerence, and correspondingly the world will become a much more dangerous place. In other words, the outcome in Ukraine is critically important both to U.S. credibility and the future of the international order. Our policies should reflect that.

I am disappointed that the majority leader has seen fit to cut off any opportunity for Senators on both sides of the aisle to offer constructive additions for a vote. We are not even asking for assurance that they would pass; we are just asking for a vote on amendments, such as military assistance to the Ukraine, expediting the permitting of LNG export facilities to help alleviate the stranglehold Putin has on Europe and Ukraine. The majority leader has said no, he is not going to allow that, and we do need to get this bill out of here tomorrow—and we will—to send a unified message that this sort of aggression will not be met with silence by the U.S. Government. Even the advocates of this underlying bill have said it is not enough. This is just a start.

I would like to hear a schedule from the majority leader of when he purports to bring some of these other important issues to the floor—particularly if Putin does what many expect him to do, and that is to continue rolling on into Western Ukraine and perhaps other countries. What will be America's response? What will be the bipartisan response of the Senate? What we have done so far is a start, but it is nowhere near good enough to exact the kinds of costs President Obama said he wants to exact on Putin and Russia for this act of international aggression and invasion in the country of Ukraine.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, I believe Senator MCCAIN is on his way to the Chamber. We want to have a colloquy about Ukraine. I ask permission to do that when Senator MCCAIN arrives.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, as Senator MCCAIN makes his way to the floor, we are trying to figure out what to do as a nation—along with our allies in Europe and throughout the world—about Ukraine and really what to do with Putin.

In my view, this is a symptom of a greater problem. Crimea had been a part of Russia for a very long time, but in 1954, I believe it was, Crimea became part of a sovereign nation called the Ukraine through an agreement. In 1994 the Ukrainians—after the collapse of

the former Soviet Union, which was the third largest nuclear power in the world—agreed to turn their nuclear weapons back over to the Russian Federation as part of the Budapest agreement. In return for receiving the weapons, the Russian Government promised to honor the territorial integrity of the Ukraine, and we were part of that deal.

I guess no one really fleshed out what honoring the territorial integrity of the Ukraine would mean, but clearly, in 1994 when the Ukrainian people gave up the nuclear weapons they possessed to the Russians—and we were part of the deal where we were going to guarantee their territorial integrity for the swap—no one envisioned that Russia would move into Crimea because they don't like the political dynamic in Kiev. If the people of the Ukraine want to move west, that is not a reason to basically abrogate the 1994 agreement.

What is going on around Russia is the following: As the former Soviet Union collapsed, people who had been in the sphere of influence of Russia—the former Soviet Union—have all embarked on a different path for the most part. There are a couple of people who align with Russia but not many.

My goal is quite simple: Allow the people of the Ukraine, Poland, and the former Soviet Union to make their decision about how they would construct their country apart from threats of force or intimidation by Russia.

It is no surprise to me that all those who could choose to move away from Russia because of the experience they had in the past have done so. Ukrainian people will always have a unique relationship with Russia, but they want to be Ukrainian.

There are a lot of ethnic Russians in Ukraine. We have everybody in America. America is an idea, not an ethnic group or a particular religion. Ukraine is multiethnic. They have ethnic Russians with a bunch of other folks—“Ukrainians,” for lack of a better word.

The bottom line is that they have been debating among themselves about how to move forward and in what direction to move. Yanukovych won an election. He moved the Ukrainian people away from Europe and toward Russia. The President preceding him rode a revolution into power—the Orange Revolution, which some would argue did not produce the results the Ukrainian people were hoping for. It took us a long time as a nation—and we are still trying—to figure out who we are and where we are going. Democracies are messy.

The one thing we should all be doing is aligning ourselves around the concept that choosing one's destiny as an individual within the confines of the law and choosing one's destiny as a nation in international law should preclude having that choice taken away by your neighbor through military force and intimidation.

Entering into Crimea was a breach of international law. It was a breach of

the 1994 agreement. Putin has proven to be an antidemocratic force in the world and in Russia.

When you are dealing with somebody, you need to look at their value system and their agenda and their interest. The value system of Mr. Putin is that of a KGB colonel. Most of his adult life he worked for the KGB, so his value system comes from that organization. It is about the ends, not the means. Democracy is about the process. I am not surprised that he snuffed out democracy—as any reasonable person would know it in Russia—and that he has made the Duma almost irrelevant, if not a joke. There is no independent judiciary; if you oppose Putin, you are liable to go to jail. I understand where he is coming from because of his value system; I just don't agree with it.

What we can't do is let him affect those who are living around him who want to go on a different path because the day you begin to do that, it never works out well. In World War II, every time somebody gave Hitler a little of this or a little of that, it never worked out well.

So what do we do? The European community, along with the United States, has a historic chance to reset what I think is a deterioration of world security and order. Having sanctions combined with aid, including sanctioning the Russians in a fashion they will feel, hitting their energy sectors, their oil and gas companies masquerading in this country, and increasing the capability of a gutted Ukrainian Army to defend themselves from further insurgents, would be a combination of hitting the Russians and helping the Ukrainians militarily and economically without any boots on the ground from the United States. I hope that is what the President will do. That is what we are trying to do here—to some extent, at least—on the sanctions side in the U.S. Senate.

I see Senator MCCAIN has arrived. He has been the most consistent voice for the last decade about the role of America, our destiny as a country, with what we should align ourselves, understanding the Arab spring, and he has been a thorn in the side of Putin and Russia for quite awhile. So I wish to, if I could, ask a question of Senator MCCAIN.

Given what we know about Putin's past and what he has done in Crimea, what does the Senator expect in the future and what can we reasonably do as a nation to change the outcome?

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank my colleague.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with the Senator from New Hampshire and the Senator from South Carolina.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank my colleagues. The American people should know exactly what has happened and what is happening now, and what may happen, unless we show a steadfast and robust response to the active aggression which

has just taken place as Colonel Putin has moved and is aggressively using the force of arms, invaded a country and absorbed part of that country into Russia. A blatant act of aggression, sparked by the age-old practice of demonstrations and desire for intervention to protect Russian-speaking people has just been enacted by Vladimir Putin.

Vladimir Putin's forces, I would say to my friend from South Carolina, as he knows, are on the border of Eastern Ukraine right now, and they are poised to invade. They even have forces in Belarus. Vladimir Putin is figuring out the cost-benefit ratio of moving into Eastern Ukraine, the cost-benefit ratio of moving into Moldova, which is not a member of NATO; of inciting the Russians there—there are 1,400 Russian troops stationed in Transnistria. He is figuring out the cost-benefit ratio of inciting violence in the Russian-speaking population of the Baltic countries, especially Estonia.

Vladimir Putin is on the move. A fundamental and naive attitude toward Vladimir Putin by this President and this administration, I hope, is shattered for all time. Vladimir Putin is a KGB colonel who said the greatest mistake of the 20th century was to break up the Soviet Union. He is intent on restoring the Russian empire. That is what Vladimir Putin is all about. And what has been our response? Fascinating. The President of the United States, in his press conference yesterday, basically said, So what I announced and what the European Council announced was that we are consulting and putting in place the framework, the architecture for additional sanctions, additional costs should Russia take the next step.

How does Vladimir Putin read that statement by the President of the United States? He reads it by saying, We got away with it. We got Crimea back.

Both the Senator from South Carolina and I predicted he would not give up Sevastopol and he would invade if he felt it was necessary to do so.

So that is where we are today. Does anybody believe that when the President of the United States says "the architecture for additional sanctions, additional costs, should Russia take the next step"—how does Vladimir Putin interpret that statement?

I wish to digress for a minute. There has been a lot of conversation about what the reaction was to Georgia and the invasion of Georgia and what the Bush administration did or did not do. I will let people judge what the Bush administration did or did not do.

I will submit for the RECORD an opinion piece written by Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and Senator Joe Lieberman dated August 26, 2008, after the invasion by Vladimir Putin into Georgia at the conclusion of my remarks.

At that time—this is 2008—Senator Lieberman and Senator GRAHAM wrote:

There is disturbing evidence Russia is already laying the groundwork to apply the

same arguments used to justify its intervention in Georgia to other parts of its near abroad—most ominously in Crimea.

That is what Senator GRAHAM and Senator Lieberman said 6 years ago.

They went on:

This strategically important peninsula is part of Ukraine, but with a large ethnic Russian population and the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol.

Then Senator Lieberman and Senator GRAHAM went on to argue for a much more robust response than the Bush administration gave:

Specifically, the Georgian military should be given the anti-aircraft and antiarmor systems necessary to deter any renewed Russian aggression.

Our response to the invasion of Georgia must include regional actions to reassure Russia's rattled neighbors and strengthen trans-Atlantic solidarity. This means reinvigorating NATO as a military alliance.

It goes on and on.

Senator Lieberman and Senator GRAHAM 6 years ago predicted this. I wonder what lesson this President took from that event and their predictions. The fact is—and it is with great sadness I tell my colleagues—we will hear a lot of rhetoric, there will be a lot of meetings, gatherings and conversations and threats about what needs to be done. But for a broad variety of reasons, which I do not have the time to go through, I predict to my colleagues now that the sanctions that are in place, which are for a handful of people, will be the extent of our reaction to the invasion of Crimea and the further violation of Ukrainian territory from the east.

After Hitler invaded Austria in 1938, he gave a speech in Vienna, from the balcony of a hotel in Vienna. We should look back at that speech—and I will give more quotes from it. It is a carbon copy of what Vladimir Putin said about Crimea. Hitler said they had to go in and protect the German-speaking people and they had to do it with force of arms. But guess what. They were going to have a referendum. And they had—they used to call it plebiscites then—they had a referendum—a plebiscite—in Austria, and guess what. Ninety-six percent of the people voted that they wanted to be a part of Nazi Germany. This is an old playbook Vladimir Putin is operating from.

So, tomorrow, fortunately, there is going to be a vote on some assistance to our beleaguered friends in Ukraine. I believe military assistance is a vital part of the assistance.

I ask my friend from South Carolina: Isn't it true the first thing people need once they have been invaded, once part of their country has been taken over, is the ability to defend themselves? And isn't it a fact that the Ukrainian military, because of previous administrations, has been emasculated and they only have about 6,000 troops they can rely on? We just saw in Crimea their total inability to resist what the Russians did to their fleet and to their bases.

Mr. GRAHAM. The Senator from Arizona is absolutely right.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, if I could interrupt to ask unanimous consent that the article entitled "Russia's Aggression Is a Challenge to World Order" by LINDSEY GRAHAM and Joe Lieberman, dated August 26, 2008, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Aug. 26, 2008]

RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION IS A CHALLENGE TO WORLD ORDER

(By Lindsey Graham and Joe Lieberman)

In the wake of Russia's invasion of Georgia, the United States and its trans-Atlantic allies have rightly focused on two urgent and immediate tasks: getting Russian soldiers out, and humanitarian aid in.

But having just returned from Georgia, Ukraine and Poland, where we met with leaders of these countries, we believe it is imperative for the West to look beyond the day-to-day management of this crisis. The longer-term strategic consequences, some of which are already being felt far beyond the Caucasus, have to be addressed.

Russia's aggression is not just a threat to a tiny democracy on the edge of Europe. It is a challenge to the political order and values at the heart of the continent.

For more than 60 years, from World War II through the Cold War to our intervention in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the U.S. has fostered and fought for the creation of a Europe that is whole, free and at peace. This stands as one of the greatest strategic achievements of the 20th century: the gradual transformation of a continent, once the scene of the most violent and destructive wars ever waged, into an oasis of peace and prosperity where borders are open and uncontested and aggression unthinkable.

Russia's invasion of Georgia represents the most serious challenge to this political order since Slobodan Milosevic unleashed the demons of ethnic nationalism in the Balkans. What is happening in Georgia today, therefore, is not simply a territorial dispute. It is a struggle about whether a new dividing line is drawn across Europe: between nations that are free to determine their own destinies, and nations that are consigned to the Kremlin's autocratic orbit.

That is the reason countries like Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic States are watching what happens in the Caucasus so closely. We heard that last week in Warsaw, Kiev and Tbilisi. There is no doubt in the minds of leaders in Ukraine and Poland—if Moscow succeeds in Georgia, they may be next.

There is disturbing evidence Russia is already laying the groundwork to apply the same arguments used to justify its intervention in Georgia to other parts of its near abroad—most ominously in Crimea. This strategically important peninsula is part of Ukraine, but with a large ethnic Russian population and the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol.

The first priority of America and Europe must be to prevent the Kremlin from achieving its strategic objectives in Georgia. Having been deterred from marching on Tbilisi and militarily overthrowing the democratically elected government there, Russian forces spent last week destroying the country's infrastructure, including roads, bridges, port and security facilities. This was more than random looting. It was a deliberate campaign to collapse the economy of Georgia, in the hope of taking the government down with it.

The humanitarian supplies the U.S. military is now ferrying to Georgia are critically

important to the innocent men, women and children displaced by the fighting, some of whom we saw last week. Also needed, immediately, is a joint commitment by the U.S. and the European Union to fund a large-scale, comprehensive reconstruction plan—developed by the Georgian government, in consultation with the World Bank, IMF and other international authorities—and for the U.S. Congress to support this plan as soon as it returns to session in September.

Any assistance plan must also include the rebuilding of Georgia's security forces. Our past aid to the Georgian military focused on supporting the light, counterterrorism-oriented forces that facilitate Tbilisi's contribution to coalition operations in Iraq. We avoided giving the types of security aid that could have been used to blunt Russia's conventional onslaught. It is time for that to change.

Specifically, the Georgian military should be given the anti-aircraft and antiarmor systems necessary to deter any renewed Russian aggression. These defensive capabilities will help to prevent this conflict from erupting again, and make clear we will not allow the Russians to forcibly redraw the boundaries of sovereign nations.

Our response to the invasion of Georgia must include regional actions to reassure Russia's rattled neighbors and strengthen trans-Atlantic solidarity. This means reinvigorating NATO as a military alliance, not just a political one. Contingency planning for the defense of all member states against conventional and unconventional attack, including cyber warfare, needs to be revived. The credibility of Article Five of the NATO Charter—that an attack against one really can and will be treated as an attack against all—needs to be bolstered.

The U.S. must also reaffirm its commitment to allies that have been the targets of Russian bullying because of their willingness to work with Washington. The recent missile-defense agreement between Poland and the U.S., for instance, is not aimed at Russia. But this has not stopped senior Russian officials from speaking openly about military retaliation against Warsaw. Irrespective of our political differences over missile defense, Democrats and Republicans should join together in Congress to pledge solidarity with Poland, along with the Czech Republic, against these outrageous Russian threats.

Finally, the U.S. and Europe need a new trans-Atlantic energy alliance. In recent years, Russia has proven all too willing to use its oil and gas resources as a weapon, and to try to consolidate control over the strategic energy corridors to the West. By working together, an alliance can frustrate these designs and diminish our dependence on the foreign oil that is responsible for the higher energy prices here at home.

In crafting a response to the Georgia crisis, we must above all reaffirm our conviction that Russia need not be a competitor or an adversary. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Democratic and Republican administrations have engaged Russia, sending billions of dollars to speed its economic recovery and welcoming its integration into the flagship institutions of the international community. We did this because we believed that a strong, prosperous Russia can be a strategic partner and a friend. We still do.

But Russia's leaders have made a different choice. While we stand ready to rebuild relations with Moscow and work together on shared challenges, Russia's current course will only alienate and isolate it from the rest of the world.

We believe history will judge the Russian invasion of Georgia as a serious strategic miscalculation. Although it is for the moment flush with oil wealth, Russia's political

elite remains kleptocratic, and its aggression exposed as much weakness as strength. The invasion of Georgia will not only have a unifying effect on the West, it also made clear that Russia—unlike the Soviet Union—has few real allies of strategic worth. To date, the only countries to defend Russia's actions in the Caucasus have been Cuba and Belarus—and the latter, only after the Kremlin publicly complained about its silence.

In the long run, a Russia that tries to define its greatness in terms of spheres of influence, client states and forced fealty to Moscow will fail—impoverishing its citizens in the process. The question is only how long until Russia's leaders rediscover this lesson from their own history.

Until they do, the watchword of the West must be solidarity: solidarity with the people of Georgia and its democratically elected government, solidarity with our allies throughout the region, and above all, solidarity with the values that have given meaning to our trans-Atlantic community of democracies and our vision of a European continent that is whole, free and at peace.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, if people are wondering why Senator McCain's name wasn't on that article—he is on everything else Joe and I did—it is because he was running for President and just got the nomination.

We were very much worried then, the three of us, that the Bush administration wasn't doing enough, and we needed to help the Georgian people as a signal not only to those in Georgia but other people in the neighborhood.

Let's talk about the Ukrainian military. It has been devastated, it has been gutted, because Yanukovich, the Ukrainian President, who won the election by less than 1 million votes—if you take Crimea out of Ukraine electorally, then no pro-Russian candidate inside Ukraine has much of a chance to win. So now they have destroyed the balance of power inside Ukraine politically. So as those left in Ukraine, the Ukrainian people move west, they are going to have the ability to align themselves with Europe. Putin is, in my view, very much likely to take some eastern cities that may ask for his help, because the referendum by the Ukraine to move west they opposed, but they can't stop because of the electoral change.

So watch out for a move by Ukraine to integrating the European Union in April or May when they have an election, and people in the east create a fake fight and Russia uses that as a reason to go further into the east.

But to Senator McCain's point: President Obama has conceded Crimea. There is just no other way we can say it. Our European allies and our President have basically said, if you do any more, we are going to get tougher with you. The Senator from Arizona nailed this. What does that say to Putin? I got Crimea. Seven people and I may be sanctioned, but I have been given Crimea by Europe and the United States.

The sanctions we are talking about get tougher only if he moves further into his sovereign neighbor.

Six thousand troops are combat-ready in Ukraine. Why? Because the pro-Russian President and their De-

fense Minister, who got fired yesterday, gutted the Ukrainian military, setting up a scenario such as this, making it impossible for the Ukrainians to effectively defend themselves.

Here is the question for us: Do we let the Russians get away with it? They have been planning this for a while. Clearly, the pro-Russian forces inside Ukraine took on the task of neutering the Ukrainian military and they have done a heck of a good job. Should the United States and our NATO partners, at the request of the Ukrainian people, supply them with defensive weapons to rebuild the military, gutted by pro-Russian elements? To me, the answer is yes. Because if we want to make Putin think twice about what he does next, he has to pay a price greater than he has for Crimea. If he gets away with this and he doesn't pay any price, he is going to be on steroids. But if he thinks about moving and he sees on the other side of Crimea a Ukrainian people willing to fight with some capacity, that will change the equation. Because it is one thing to cheer in Moscow for getting something for almost nothing in terms of effort. It will be another thing to talk about Russian soldiers getting killed to continue to be on the aggressive path.

So if the NATO alliance, along with the United States, doesn't help rebuild the Ukrainian military so they can defend themselves without our troops being involved, we have made a historic mistake, because everybody in the world is watching how this movie ends. The Iranians are watching, after Syria, now Russia. Does anybody in their right mind believe the Iranians take us seriously as a nation when it comes to stopping their nuclear program?

So I say to Senator McCain, you have been a voice for realism, understanding Putin for who he is. For years, you have been telling the Senate and the country and the world at large: Watch this guy. There have been a series of foreign policy failures that have added up to make it confident to Putin that he can move forward without consequences.

So I hope we can convince our colleagues in the Senate and the House to honor a reasonable request by the Ukrainian people to help them rebuild the military destroyed by pro-Russian forces.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I would like to make a couple additional points to my friend from South Carolina, and I notice the Senator from New Hampshire is here.

In 1994, an agreement, a treaty was reached which divested Ukraine of the world's third largest nuclear inventory. In return for Ukraine turning over that inventory of nuclear weapons, there was a pledge made by Russia, the United States, and the British that they would respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea. That was a part of the treaty. Obviously, Vladimir Putin violated that.

The second point is, look, I have no illusions or worry about the long-term future of Russia. Russia is now a gas station masquerading as a country. Once we get the LNG and other energy to the European countries, it will dramatically reduce and eventually eliminate Vladimir Putin's influence because there is nothing but corruption and oligarchs in Russia today. One of the reasons Vladimir Putin wanted the Crimea and did not want Ukraine to be independent is because he was afraid this "disease" may spread to Russia. The Russian people are also sick and tired of the kleptocracy and the corruption.

Finally, again we need—and we should have had in this legislation—a commitment to help export our excess energy to the Europeans so they then would be able to reduce their dependency—not just Ukraine but all of Europe on their dependency on Russian energy.

So I have no doubt about the future of Russia. It will collapse like a house of cards. But in the short term, what Mr. Putin will do in committing further aggression—because this has raised his popularity dramatically at home. One of the most respected people whom Senator GRAHAM and Senator AYOTTE and I had to deal with over the years was Bob Gates. Mr. Gates served this country in a variety of posts, the latest of course being as an outstanding Secretary of Defense. This morning in the Wall Street Journal he wrote a piece called "Putin's Challenge to the West." I am not going to read the whole thing.

I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Mar. 25, 2014]

PUTIN'S CHALLENGE TO THE WEST

(By Robert M. Gates)

Russia has thrown down a gauntlet that is not limited to Crimea or even Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has a long-festering grudge: He deeply resents the West for winning the Cold War. He blames the United States in particular for the collapse of his beloved Soviet Union, an event he has called the "worst geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century."

His list of grievances is long and was on full display in his March 18 speech announcing the annexation of Crimea by Russia. He is bitter about what he sees as Russia's humiliations in the 1990s—economic collapse; the expansion of NATO to include members of the U.S.S.R.'s own "alliance," the Warsaw Pact; Russia's agreement to the treaty limiting conventional forces in Europe, or as he calls it, "the colonial treaty"; the West's perceived dismissal of Russian interests in Serbia and elsewhere; attempts to bring Ukraine and Georgia into NATO and the European Union; and Western governments, businessmen and scholars all telling Russia how to conduct its affairs at home and abroad.

Mr. Putin aspires to restore Russia's global power and influence and to bring the now-independent states that were once part of the Soviet Union back into Moscow's orbit. While he has no apparent desire to recreate

the Soviet Union (which would include responsibility for a number of economic basket cases), he is determined to create a Russian sphere of influence—political, economic and security—and dominance. There is no grand plan or strategy to do this, just opportunistic and ruthless aspiration. And patience.

Mr. Putin, who began his third, non-consecutive presidential term in 2012, is playing a long game. He can afford to: Under the Russian Constitution, he could legally remain president until 2024. After the internal chaos of the 1990s, he has ruthlessly restored "order" to Russia, oblivious to protests at home and abroad over his repression of nascent Russian democracy and political freedoms.

In recent years, he has turned his authoritarian eyes on the "near-abroad." In 2008, the West did little as he invaded Georgia, and Russian troops still occupy the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. He has forced Armenia to break off its agreements with the European Union, and Moldova is under similar pressure.

Last November, through economic leverage and political muscle, he forced then-President Viktor Yanukovich to abort a Ukrainian agreement with the EU that would have drawn it toward the West. When Mr. Yanukovich, his minion, was ousted as a result, Mr. Putin seized Crimea and is now making ominous claims and military movements regarding all of eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine is central to Mr. Putin's vision of a pro-Russian bloc, partly because of its size and importantly because of Kiev's role as the birthplace of the Russian Empire more than a thousand years ago. He will not be satisfied or rest until a pro-Russian government is restored in Kiev.

He also has a dramatically different worldview than the leaders of Europe and the U.S. He does not share Western leaders' reverence for international law, the sanctity of borders, which Westerners' believe should only be changed through negotiation, due process and rule of law. He has no concern for human and political rights. Above all, Mr. Putin clings to a zero-sum worldview. Contrary to the West's belief in the importance of win-win relationships among nations, for Mr. Putin every transaction is win-lose; when one party benefits, the other must lose. For him, attaining, keeping and amassing power is the name of the game.

The only way to counter Mr. Putin's aspirations on Russia's periphery is for the West also to play a strategic long game. That means to take actions that unambiguously demonstrate to Russians that his worldview and goals—and his means of achieving them—over time will dramatically weaken and isolate Russia.

Europe's reliance on Russian oil and gas must be reduced, and truly meaningful economic sanctions must be imposed, knowing there may be costs to the West as well. NATO allies bordering Russia must be militarily strengthened and reinforced with alliance forces; and the economic and cyber vulnerabilities of the Baltic states to Russian actions must be reduced (especially given the number of Russians and Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia).

Western investment in Russia should be curtailed; Russia should be expelled from the G-8 and other forums that offer respect and legitimacy; the U.S. defense budget should be restored to the level proposed in the Obama administration's 2014 budget a year ago, and the Pentagon directed to cut overhead drastically, with saved dollars going to enhanced capabilities, such as additional Navy ships; U.S. military withdrawals from Europe should be halted; and the EU should be urged to grant associate agreements with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine.

So far, however, the Western response has been anemic. Mr. Putin is little influenced by seizure of personal assets of his cronies or the oligarchs, or restrictions on their travel. Unilateral U.S. sanctions, save on Russian banks, will not be effective absent European cooperation. The gap between Western rhetoric and Western actions in response to out-and-out aggression is a yawning chasm. The message seems to be that if Mr. Putin doesn't move troops into eastern Ukraine, the West will impose no further sanctions or costs. De facto, Russia's seizure of Crimea will stand and, except for a handful of Russian officials, business will go on as usual.

No one wants a new Cold War, much less a military confrontation. We want Russia to be a partner, but that is now self-evidently not possible under Mr. Putin's leadership. He has thrown down a gauntlet that is not limited to Crimea or even Ukraine. His actions challenge the entire post-Cold War order including, above all, the right of independent states to align themselves and do business with whomever they choose.

Tacit acceptance of settling old revanchist scores by force is a formula for ongoing crises and potential armed conflict, whether in Europe, Asia or elsewhere. A China behaving with increasing aggressiveness in the East and South China seas, an Iran with nuclear aspirations and interventionist policies in the Middle East, and a volatile and unpredictable North Korea are all watching events in Europe. They have witnessed the fecklessness of the West in Syria. Similar division and weakness in responding to Russia's most recent aggression will, I fear, have dangerous consequences down the road.

Mr. Putin's challenge comes at a most unpropitious time for the West. Europe faces a weak economic recovery and significant economic ties with Russia. The U.S. is emerging from more than a dozen years at war and leaders in both parties face growing isolationism among voters, with the prospect of another major challenge abroad cutting across the current political grain. Crimea and Ukraine are far away, and their importance to Europe and America little understood by the public.

Therefore, the burden of explaining the need to act forcefully falls, as always, on our leaders. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Government includes the act of formulating a policy" and "persuading, leading, sacrificing, teaching always, because the greatest duty of a statesman is to educate." The aggressive, arrogant actions of Vladimir Putin require from Western leaders strategic thinking, bold leadership and steely resolve—now.

Mr. MCCAIN. This is very important for all of our colleagues and the American people to know, and they do not have to take Senator GRAHAM's and my word for it. Already we are accused of being partisan—politics stops at the water's edge, all of that baloney. When they cannot rebut the message, they shoot the messengers. This is former Secretary of Defense Gates:

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So we are not just even talking about Ukraine. We are not even talking about that part of Europe. We are talking about the lesson that bad people—whether they be Kim Jong Un or whether they be the Chinese who want to increase their influence in the South China Sea or whether they be the Iranians who continue to supply weapons to Hezbollah fighters to the fight in Syria, which the resistance is losing—in case you missed it, there was an interesting article this morning about how jihadists will establish a base in Syria with which to export terrorism throughout the Middle East and the world, including the United States of America.

The President of the United States has to understand Vladimir Putin for what he is and what his ambitions are and what he will do.

My friend from South Carolina and I are not sure what he will do now. But I think it is obvious, with his troops amassed on the boarder of Eastern Ukraine, he is contemplating further action. Whether he does so, I am not sure, but I think his calculation has to do with the cost-benefit ratio of further aggression against a sovereign nation.

I see my colleague.

Could I just make one more comment because my colleague was in Ukraine recently. These are wonderful people. All they want is what we have. They do not want to be part of Russia. They are tired of their corrupt dictator, Yanukovich, whom they had. They are willing to stand for weeks in freezing weather in Maidan—this huge square in Ukraine. Madam President, 110 of them were assassinated by snipers.

Can't we at least give them some weapons with which to defend themselves and speak up for them, rather than saying "additional costs should Russia take [the] next step."

I yield for my colleague from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, I wish to thank my colleague from Arizona and my colleague from South Carolina. I was in Ukraine on Sunday, and I was in Maidan, along with two of

my colleagues: Senator DONNELLY, who represents Indiana in the Senate, as well as Representative STEPHEN LYNCH, who is a Congressman who represents Massachusetts.

We had an opportunity, actually, to see and meet Ukrainians. In fact, when we went down to Maidan, there were 30,000 people there protesting. Do you know what they were protesting? They were protesting the Russian invasion and illegal annexation of Crimea. They were standing for their country, and they were standing against Russian aggression.

In fact, one of the experiences we had is that as we walked along, so many people came up to us and said: Thank you, America. Thank you for standing with us. In fact, I met a mother and daughter who had come from Crimea. They were waving a flag—a Ukrainian flag—and they gave me this, what I hold in my hand, and they put it around me. What they wanted me to know is that they were from Crimea and they did not accept the Russian aggression and invasion of their country. What they asked us to stand for is to stand for the freedom of the Ukrainian people to decide their future and to not let Russia interfere with their ability to decide what they want for their country.

They are wonderful people. They are very patriotic. In Maidan there were over 100 Ukrainians who were killed. Many of them were murdered by snipers who were up on the rooftops, who were just killed in cold blood by the Yanukovich government, the pro-Russian-backed government, because they were simply doing what we in the United States of America call coming out and stating their viewpoint, saying: We want a government that is not corrupt. We want a government that will allow us to have a say in our future. For that they were murdered in cold blood.

We are at an important moment for our country right now. What happened in Crimea and what is happening in Ukraine matters very much to the United States of America, because if we do not stop Russian aggression toward Ukraine, then I think this very much threatens the NATO alliance. It puts us in a position where our words do not have meaning because we were a signatory to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, along with the United Kingdom.

Russia violated that memorandum by invading Crimea. They have made further efforts to amass their troops on the boarder of Eastern Ukraine. In fact, what they are also doing is sending armed Russian agents into Eastern Ukraine to try—they are armed, they have money—and they are trying to actually create artificial demonstrations in Eastern Ukraine so they can use the very same excuse they used in Crimea to go over and take more territory of Ukraine in violation of international law and in violation of all standards among civilized countries.

I believe it is time for us to set forth—I appreciate what the President has done with the sanctions, but we need to do more. If we do not do more now, then Russia—I fear that Vladimir Putin in particular will move into the remainder of Ukraine and that we will undermine our agreement on the Budapest Memorandum. But, most important, we have a lot at stake.

First, as my colleagues have said, if we do not stand with NATO to send a strong message to Vladimir Putin, by not just sanctioning individuals, we should sanction segments of the Russian economy so he understands there are serious consequences for invading another country.

We should provide military assistance to the Ukraine military so they can defend themselves. We should revisit our decision and reinstate the memorandums of understanding that we have with Poland and the Czech Republic for missile defense systems. We as a country should be looking to help Europe reduce their dependency on Russian natural gas and oil, and there are steps we can take that will be good for our economy but will also be good for the safety and security of the world.

We should be doing all that now so Vladimir Putin, who is a schoolyard bully, understands we are very serious.

Why does it matter? Not just NATO, but we had Ukraine give up their nuclear weapons in exchange for the agreement of the United Kingdom and the United States that we would respect their sovereignty, and they felt they had assurances of security from us.

How are we going to deal with nuclear proliferation around the world and get other countries to give up their nuclear weapons if we are not serious and we do not say now: Vladimir Putin, we are serious—tough sanctions, much tougher than have been in place. We are going to support the Ukrainian military and we are not going to stand for any more aggression against the Ukrainian people—because otherwise why give up your nuclear weapons, again, if you are a country, if the United States of America does not mean anything they say on an agreement they have signed on to?

In addition, what will the Chinese do? In the Senkaku Islands they have been very aggressive toward the territory of not only the Japanese but also the Philippines, the Vietnamese, and they are watching. They are watching whether we care whether Russia invades another country, whether we care that Vladimir Putin is pushing the Ukrainian people around.

That is why this matters, not just because we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine—we do and we should—so they can decide their future, not Vladimir Putin—they, the people of their country, should decide their future—but also because it matters for us around the world, not just China, not just nuclear proliferation,

but what do the ayatollahs in Iran think about how serious we are about ending their nuclear weapons program.

This is an important moment for America, and it is time for our President to really step forward. The initial steps he took were in the right direction, but it is time not to continue saying there will be further costs. The costs must be rendered now. The Senate will be taking an important step in providing loan guarantees to Ukraine and a scheme for sanctions, but ultimately I call on the President of the United States to say to Vladimir Putin now—to recognize whom we are dealing with, the former KGB colonel—to say to him: We are going to impose sanctions on entire segments of your economy. We are going to hurt your ability to do business in the world because you have invaded another country. We are going to bolster NATO, and we are going to reinstate missile defense systems in the Czech Republic and Poland, that we will not accept this aggression.

It is time for the President to say this very clearly and to impose the consequences on Russia now because after they invade Eastern Ukraine, it will be too late.

Vladimir Putin needs to understand now that we are very serious about this, that we will stand by our word under the Budapest Memorandum, that we will stand with the Ukrainian people, and that we will make sure that we will not accept aggressions from Vladimir Putin, and that this school yard bully understands, through strength, that the United States of America will not be bullied around, nor will our friends and allies.

Mr. GRAHAM. Will the Senator yield for a question?

There is the Membership Action Plan, MAP—I think that is the acronym—where a country gets ready to enter into NATO. Georgia would like that. I think Ukraine now would like that. Here is the basic tension; don't you agree?

A plurality before Crimea was invaded wanted to move into the European Union and Ukraine. Now, I think clearly a majority, if you take the Crimea out, wants to associate with the European Union. Putin is saying hell no. So the Ukrainian people in the coming months are going to make a move toward the European Union and alliances with NATO, most likely, and the Russians are going to try to stop them.

I fear the way they will choose to stop them is not to try to influence the vote but to try to grab some eastern cities where you will have vocal minority Russian populations saying: Come here and help your fellow Russians. We are being absorbed by a bunch of thugs in Kiev. Senator McCain made a good point while we are talking. The theory of the case for Russia is: We have a legitimate right to go into this area to protect native Russians, ethnic Russians. That has no limit in that region.

If we adopt the theory of the case, ignore international law, let him break

the 1994 agreement with no punishment for taking the Crimea, then I hope you understand what comes next. The theory of this case can apply to many countries in the region, not just Crimea and the Ukraine. So we need to reject this theory of the case.

We need to make him pay a price for what he has done, not what he might do. If he does not pay a price for what he has done, I can assure you what he will do. He will do more. The last thought is that Senator McCain and I and Senator Ayotte have been talking about the Al Qaeda buildup in Syria.

The Director of National Intelligence has testified before the country as a whole, before the Congress, that the Al Qaeda elements in Syria are representing a direct threat to our European allies and to our own homeland. There was a press report yesterday: What is your Congress and your Commander in Chief doing about it?

We have been told as Members of the Senate that the 26,000-plus Al Qaeda fighters, many of them European, some American, are amassing in Syria. Al Qaeda leaders from the tribal regions in Afghanistan and Pakistan are moving into Syria to organize this cabal. One of the goals that they would like to achieve is to take this force that is in the fight in Syria and disperse it back to Europe and the United States.

What are you doing about this threat, Mr. President? Members of the Senate, you have been told—11, 12 years after 9/11—that Al Qaeda is thinking about hitting us again. They exist in a certain part of the world. They are amassing capability. Their leaders are moving in to help organize this group. What is our response? What are we doing?

It is just not Ukraine. The whole world is melting down. I would end with this thought. Ronald Reagan had a great slogan. It was not a slogan. It was a world view: Peace through strength. Here is what I will say to the times in which we live, and I will talk about this more later. I want to come with my colleagues and talk about the Al Qaeda threat in Syria and elsewhere.

Peace is an illusion when it comes to radical Islam. It can never be achieved. But here is what can be achieved: security through strength. We need to have as a Nation security policies, national security policies that will deter aggression from nation-states and radical Islamic organizations who do not fear death. We have no such policy. We need to have security through strength. We are cutting our military. We are gutting our ability to defend ourselves through reducing intelligence capabilities at a time when the threats are on the rise.

This is the most dangerous time in American history—since the end of the Cold War, in many ways since the end of World War II—because the enemies of this Nation are getting stronger and we are getting weaker. Somebody needs to change that calculation before it is too late.

So to Senator McCain and Senator Ayotte, both of you have been to the Ukraine in the last couple of weeks. You have done the hard work of traveling away from your constituents and your families to find out first hand what is on the ground. I hope that people in the body will listen to their experiences. There are a lot of Democrats who seem to have the same experience.

Mr. McCain. I thank my colleague, and I appreciate his longstanding support for freedom and democracy throughout the world, but also for a very prescient piece that he and Senator Lieberman wrote 6 years ago predicting the likelihood of the events that we have just observed taking place. There is an article in the Washington Post: "Three ways NATO can bolster Ukraine's security," by Ian Brzezinski. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 24, 2014]

THREE WAYS NATO CAN BOLSTER UKRAINE'S SECURITY

(By Ian J. Brzezinski)

NATO's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has drawn a red line, but it is one that leaves Ukraine militarily isolated, fending for itself. If the West's economic and diplomatic sanctions are to deter Moscow from further military aggression, they must be complemented by a robust defensive strategy to reinforce Ukraine's armed forces.

When Russia invaded Crimea, it mobilized 150,000 troops along Ukraine's eastern frontier. Most of those forces still menace Ukraine, with some 20,000 troops still occupying the peninsula while provocateurs sent by Moscow continue to stir unrest in the country's eastern regions.

NATO's response has, by contrast, been underwhelming. The United States and Britain reinforced the air space of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with a handful of fighter jets, and AWACs patrols fly over Poland and Romania. The United States deployed about a dozen F-16s to Poland and sent an additional ship to the Black Sea. No ally appears to have mobilized any ground forces.

When Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk met with President Obama this month, his request for weapons that would enable his military to better defend against Russia's massed forces was politely declined. Instead, the Obama administration offered uniforms and military meals.

In a similarly negative move, Vice President Biden visited Warsaw and Vilnius, Lithuania, last week to reassure them of the U.S. military commitment to their security, but he bypassed Kiev. This was surely noted by Moscow, as was Obama's recent statement that he would not allow the United States to get involved in a "military excursion" in Ukraine.

These U.S. and alliance actions constitute a red line that depicts Kiev on the outside and on its own. This must be deeply disillusioning for Ukrainians who in recent months have so courageously expressed their desire for freedom and a place in Europe—and whose forces participated in a NATO collective defense exercise as recently as November. This red line can only reassure Vladimir Putin and his military planners, whose use of unmarked military personnel—and the plausible deniability they provided—in Crimea reflected at least initial concern about potential responses from the West.

There are prudent defensive measures the United States and NATO can and should take to bolster Ukraine's security. First, Yatsenyuk's request for military equipment should be immediately approved, and anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons should be included. Equipment and weapons could quickly be transferred from prepositioned U.S. military stocks in Europe.

If NATO cannot attain the consensus to initiate such assistance, then Washington should forge a coalition of the willing or act on its own. These weapons would complicate Russian military planning and add risk to its operations against Ukraine. U.S. equipment in particular would bring back unpleasant memories of when Soviet forces encountered Western weapons in Afghanistan.

Second, the alliance or a U.S.-led coalition should back that assistance with the deployment of intelligence and surveillance capabilities and military trainers to Ukraine. This would provide not only needed situational awareness and help the Ukrainian military maximize its defensive capacities, but it would also force Moscow to consider the potential political and military repercussions of any actions that affect that presence. The deployment of military trainers to Georgia was one of the more effective elements of the U.S. effort to bolster Georgia's security after it was invaded by Russia in 2008.

Third, NATO allies and partners should soon conduct a military exercise in Ukraine as part of the effort to train the Ukrainian military. The alliance's plan to wait until its next scheduled exercise in Ukraine, this summer, could incentivize Russia to take additional military action before then.

The NATO Response Force, created to deploy on short notice a brigade-level force backed by combat air support, is well suited for such an exercise. The force offers a means to demonstrate Western resolve prudently and rapidly. It has the potential to significantly reinforce Ukraine's defense against a sudden Russian offensive, but it is not big enough to jeopardize Russia's territorial integrity.

Each of these initiatives would complicate Putin's ambitions regarding Ukraine and could be executed in the near term. None would present a threat to Russia. They would, however, amend the red line the alliance has mistakenly created, assure Ukrainians that they are not alone and force Moscow to consider the possibility of a much more costly and prolonged military conflict. The absence of a firm Western response will only encourage Putin to act aggressively again, be it to drive deeper into Ukraine, make another attempt to seize Georgia, expand Russia's occupation of Moldovan territory or grab other areas that were once part of the Soviet Union.

NATO's response to this crisis is critical to both Ukraine's security and the alliance's long-term future. A NATO summit planned for September is to focus on the alliance's way forward in a new world. But what it does to assist Ukraine today and in the coming weeks will have a far more profound influence on its future and transatlantic security.

Mr. MCCAIN. It goes on to say:

These U.S. and alliance actions constitute a red line that depicts Kiev on the outside and on its own. This must be deeply disillusioning for Ukrainians who in recent months have so courageously expressed their desire for freedom and a place in Europe—and whose forces participated in a NATO collective defense exercise as recently as November. This red line can only reassure Vladimir Putin and his military planners, whose use of unmarked military personnel—and the plausible deniability they provided—in Cri-

mea reflected at least initial concern about potential responses from the West.

One of the more remarkable returns to the days of the Soviet Union was when Vladimir Putin had the press conference and was asked if those were Russian military in Crimea, and he said: Well, they can buy old uniforms from most any store in the region.

He not only denied that Russian troops were there, but he added to the flat-out lie with a statement so ridiculous that he must have known that we knew that he was absolutely lying through his teeth. Let me just say to my colleagues what we need to do is we must recognize the reality that President Putin is not, and will never be, our partner. He will always insist on being our adversary and working to revise the entire post Cold War vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace—and the security architecture that supports it. Our policy must begin with the reality of what Vladimir Putin is, what his ambitions are, and what he is willing to do.

We have to support Ukraine's emergence as a successful democracy with a thriving economy, fighting corruption, and with a strengthened national unity. We must ensure that the March elections in Ukraine occur on time, freely, and fairly. We must meet Ukraine's request for immediate military assistance as part of a larger, long-term initiative to help the Ukrainian armed forces rebuild and reform into an effective force that can deter aggression and defend their nation; support countries such as Moldova and Georgia in deepening democratic, economic, and military reforms that can hasten their integration into the Euro-Atlantic community; expand sanctions under the Magnitsky Act; increase targeted sanctions against Putin's sources of power, especially for corruption; push for an arms embargo against Russia; prevent defense technology transfers; use the upcoming NATO summit to enlarge the alliance; move Georgia into the Membership Action Plan; expand NATO cooperation with Ukraine; conduct significant contingency planning within NATO to deter aggression and defend alliance members, especially along the eastern flank; strategically shift NATO military assets eastward to support deterrence.

We must take these actions. None of them, by the way, entail the commitment of American troops. I also want to make one additional comment. I hope that the Senator from New Hampshire would comment as well. Whenever I see a news story—no matter which network it is on—the overwhelming majority of American people do not want to have anything to do with Syria.

The overwhelming majority of Americans do not want to have anything to do with Ukraine. We do not even want to assist the people of Ukraine. We do not want to assist the people of Syria that are fighting and struggling—

140,000 of whom have been slaughtered already in the most atrocious fashion. I say to my colleagues and to the American people: We cannot ignore the lessons of history. We cannot revert to the 1930s when isolationist impetus in this country kept us out of being prepared for a conflict.

If it had not been for Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the actions he took in the late 1930s, we would have had an even worse time after Pearl Harbor. It is up to the President of the United States to inform the American people of what our vital national security interests are. That does not mean involvement in another war.

But we cannot leave the world because the world will not leave us. So the President of the United States—rather than announcing that if the Russians go any further there will be punishment for it, the President of the United States needs to go before the American people and say: Here is what we are facing. We are facing what Senator GRAHAM just talked about: the rise of Al Qaeda across the Middle East; the failure in Syria, which is now becoming a breeding ground for Islamic extremism; the Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea; the Iranian talks which are “failing;” and of course this latest and most outrageous aggression committed by Vladimir Putin.

The world is a dangerous place. It cries out for American leadership. As LINDSEY GRAHAM said, there was a guy, in the words of Margaret Thatcher, who won the Cold War without firing a shot. It is called peace through strength. It is through being steadfast.

Right now, when the Chinese announced that they are increasing their defense spending by 12.2 percent, we are announcing that we are cutting our defense dramatically. That is a long series of cuts in defense, which can put this Nation's national security interests further in danger.

I thank my colleague from New Hampshire for going to Kiev. It is an uplifting and wonderful experience to see how much they want to be like us, how much they appreciate what little we do, how much it matters to them to be able to be part of Europe and free, and to have an economic system that is not beset with the corruption and kleptocracy that devastated their economy.

They need our help. I hope tomorrow we will be passing legislation which will be the first step in providing that assistance to this Nation. I say to my colleagues, the people of Ukraine will be watching us. They are watching what we do. The sooner we guarantee \$1 billion of loan guarantees to them, the sooner we impose these sanctions which are embodied in this bill in a bipartisan fashion, the better it will be for the people of Ukraine to know that we stand with them.

Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, I want to thank the senior Senator from Arizona for his leadership and to really frame what Ronald Reagan said. It is

so important at this moment. He said: Of the four wars in my lifetime, none came about because the U.S. was too strong. So when we talk about peace through strength, we are talking about ensuring that we do not have to get involved in another conflict. Before I went to Ukraine I was in Afghanistan. One of the commanders that I was speaking with in Afghanistan said to me: You know, Senator AYOTTE, I worry about America's span of attention. I am worried. I have fought here. I have done multiple tours here. We sacrificed here. I am really worried. I understand how people at home view where things are in Afghanistan. But for us just to throw our hands up right now and what that will do—I am just worried that we are forgetting the lessons of what happened on September 11, when we thought that we did not have to be engaged, when we thought that the fight could stay over here and that this country Afghanistan, which was a haven for Al Qaeda, that they would just leave us alone.

Unfortunately, in this fight with Al Qaeda, they won't leave us alone. Now we are facing a situation in Syria where our Secretary of Homeland Security or our Director of National Intelligence has said the threat of Al Qaeda in Syria is a threat to our homeland.

As we look at events unfolding around the world, what is happening in Ukraine does matter to the United States of America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Ms. AYOTTE. I ask unanimous consent for 1 additional minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. AYOTTE. I would say in order that we don't have to deal with wars here and that we hopefully don't have to send our men and women in uniform to war, we have to maintain a strong position in the United States and Ukraine using the strongest sanctions we can, having a prepared military, and supporting our allies to ensure that we don't fall back into forgetting the lessons we have seen. When America disengages, it becomes dangerous for America. That is what this is about.

I am pleased we are going to pass bipartisan legislation to support Ukraine. I ask the President to issue even stronger sanctions against Russia, Vladimir Putin, and to ensure we stand with the people of Ukraine, because when we stand with them we stand for ourselves as well and what we believe in.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MURPHY. Yesterday, healthcare.gov saw about 1.2 million visits to the site. The call centers, which are busy enrolling people at a pace that is now exceeding 50,000 to 100,000 people a day, saw 390,000 phone calls.

A new poll just came out suggesting that a full 60 percent of Americans

want the Affordable Care Act to stay in place, and if they want changes, they only want minor changes. Only 11 percent of people in this poll said they want to repeal and replace the law, and only 18 percent said they wanted to repeal it completely.

It is not rocket science to figure out why we have hundreds of thousands of people lining up as we approach the deadline for enrollment seeking to get care. It is not rocket science why there are over 1 million people only yesterday alone going to the Web site trying to find out what their options are.

The simple fact is that even today, as we stand on the brink of the enrollment deadline, there are still millions of Americans who remain on the outside of the best health care system in the world. There are still millions of families who are waking up today, as they have week after week, year after year, wondering how they are going to pay the medical bills that are piling up for a sick father and worrying what would happen if their child were diagnosed with a disease, having no way to pay for it. That is a reality still today for millions of families. Many of them, frankly, have stayed away from the Web site because of the misinformation that has been spread by opponents of the health care law.

Now as we are coming to the enrollment deadline, we are seeing a surge of interest, much of it from families who are desperate to finally get access to health care insurance that will allow them to avoid the fate of millions of other Americans who have fallen into bankruptcy, have lost their homes, have lost their cars, and who have lost their savings simply because of a mistimed illness.

I was pleased today to see the President make a very simple announcement. What he said is that people who are in line trying to apply for health care insurance when the deadline hits on Monday are going to get a shot to complete their application.

For very complex cases, for instance, women who are in a situation of extreme domestic violence who don't want to apply jointly and have to apply themselves, they are going to be able to have a little extra time as well. For most of the people I represent, that is just common sense.

If someone is desperately in need of health care and if they have gone months, years, and maybe even decades without health care and they have this chance—a chance that will expire Monday this year—then if they are in line trying to fill out an application, they should be able to get through that application even if the midnight clock hits.

I heard my friend from Wyoming speak on the floor earlier today and criticize this announcement from the President. I thought it was worthwhile to come to the floor and make it clear that if someone is criticizing a simple decision to allow people a little bit of extra time, they are essentially rooting

for people to stay outside of the ranks of those who are insured. They are essentially guaranteeing that people who could get insurance, because they have the ability now over the course of the next few days to sign up, aren't going to be able to get it.

Of course, I think people understand this concept because there is plenty of precedent. When folks rush home from work late on election day to go vote, they often see very long lines outside of the polling place. But we don't shut down the polls at 8 o'clock when there is a line outside. We allow people who are in line to vote because they worked hard to get there, to get in line. They deserve a chance to express their choice in an election. That is essentially what the President has announced today, that individuals who are in line on March 31 are going to get a chance to sign up, because why on Earth would we deny people the ability to get insurance? I get it that there are people who oppose this law, who want it repealed, and many people of good faith who want it replaced with something else. But the reality of here and now is that there are millions of people who are going onto the Web site every day. There are hundreds of thousands of people who are calling, and they deserve a chance to get health care insurance, to be able to treat their loved ones for the diseases that they have today or may incur.

I would note that there is precedence to this. When President Bush was managing the enrollment process for Medicare Part D, he did, in fact, the same thing. He extended the enrollment deadline for people who were in process and for complex cases. People who were trying to sign up for Medicare Part D at the enrollment deadline received extra time, and there were plenty of Republicans who supported that effort.

I come to the floor today to make it clear that for a lot of folks it makes sense that if people are so desperate for health care and they are in the process of filling out these applications, they should get the chance to finish the job.

I am continuing to receive letters and emails from people who have gone through the process and whose lives have been transformed. I simply want to make sure that on Monday, if people are in the process of signing up, they don't get foreclosed from the possibility of experiencing a reality such as one of my constituents, Sean Hannon, from Weston, CT. I will finish by reading a letter he sent to our office.

Speaking for himself and his wife he said:

As working freelancers, my wife and I are not covered by company health plans and we have had to buy private health insurance out of pocket. It has been our largest financial burden. Last year, our monthly premium for Golden Rule was \$1,216. That came to \$14,592 annually. This plan also came with a huge deductible that needed to be met completely before any payout.

This year, Golden Rule increased our premium to \$1,476 a month, or \$17,712 annually.

On February 1, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, we were able to switch from Golden Rule to Connecticutcare on the CT Exchange.

It wasn't easy to go through enrollment, but we had great assistance from a woman at the enrollment center in New Haven, and she stuck with us until we got it right.

Let me tell you what the new healthcare plan has done for us . . .

First and foremost, we lowered our monthly premium of \$1,475 to \$309. Let me spell that out so you know it wasn't a typo: three hundred and nine dollars. That is a savings of nearly 80%!

So now I am sure you are thinking that we must have made a huge sacrifice in quality of care or services. Just the opposite. We have lost none of the benefits we previously had. We were able to keep all of our doctors, our primary GP and specialists. They all accept the insurance.

While we still have a high deductible, unlike the previous plan that didn't pay anything until the deductible was met, we now have co-pays for doctor visits of \$30, and procedures such as CAT scans and MRIs are \$75 for each visit, and the remainder of the expense is covered COMPLETELY, even before the deductible is met.

And we have the peace of mind of not being dropped or penalized for pre-existing conditions.

They finish by saying:

Despite the messed up rollout and the attendant growing pains of a massive program, ObamaCare has been a Godsend, and we are overwhelmed and ecstatic over the dramatic difference this has made in our family budget.

We are sharing all of this personal information here because there is an aggressive campaign underway to dismantle this valuable program. The misinformation being put out there is skewing public opinion and this must not happen. . . . This treasure is ours to lose if we do not speak up now.

Yesterday 1.2 million people went to the Web site and 400,000 people called in to seek help. I imagine those numbers will continue to escalate as we move through the weekend. They deserve to be able to get to a reality that Sean Hannon and his family are experiencing now. They deserve to have a chance at paying lower premiums, 80 percent savings, for some individuals, to finally get insured for the diseases, illnesses, and conditions that have plagued these families for years.

I applaud the President for allowing these families the ability to complete their applications, and I hope that many of them get to see the same final reality that the Hannon of Weston, CT, have.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor, having heard my colleague's concerns and story of a family who was helped by the President's health care law. We want people in this country to be helped. My concern is there are a lot of people who are actually being hurt by the President's health care law. We shouldn't have to hurt people, specifically people who have had insurance, to try to help people who haven't had insurance. That is the big concern that my friend from Connecticut referred to as I came to the floor this morning to discuss.

I have grave concerns about the impact on the people of Wyoming and all

around the country as we are getting letters and concerns. We were told on the floor that all of these stories—nine of us were reading different stories—that all of these are lies.

These are not lies. These are people hurt by the President's health care law. We see them in States all around the country.

We don't know how many people have signed up, how many have gone to the Web site. The White House can't even tell us if they know how many have insurance.

Sure, they may have had a lot of people visit the Web site. I wonder how many people have actually paid to have insurance? What the President asked for is he said: We are going to get 30 million people who didn't have insurance to have insurance.

It looks as if there may be fewer than 2 million who go through that. We know that fewer than 1 in 10 young people—the people who are supposed to pay for this program—young people paying more so that older, sicker people will pay less, those people aren't signing up. Only 1 in 10 of those eligible at that age is signing up.

That is what we are seeing across the country, and that is why the worry is that there is going to need to be a big bailout of this program because the money that is being spent by the taxpayers is not getting the job done. They are not doing it in a way to actually help the people who need help without hurting so many other people, the 5 million people who received letters of cancellation.

I hear my friend and colleague from Connecticut. It is not only people—one person who may have gotten insurance in Connecticut who may have been helped in that situation. The impact on jobs and communities has been dramatic. When I looked at the State of Connecticut, there was a story in the New York Times only last month about the impact of this law that my colleague and friend has voted for that has now been changed over two dozen times. They are interviewing a superintendent of schools in Meriden, CT.

We just heard a story of somebody who was helped by the health care law. Now let's look at what has happened to the superintendent of schools in Meriden, CT, Mark Benigni. He is also a board member of the American Association of School Administrators.

In an interview with the New York Times, he said that the new health care law was having "unintended consequences for school systems across the Nation."

We have a letter from somebody in Connecticut, but let's see what happened to school systems across the country. Maybe they have children in school, I don't know.

The article states:

In Connecticut, as in many States, significant numbers of part-time school employees work more than 30 hours a week and do not receive health benefits.

We know the health care law defines a workweek as anything above 30

hours. They have people who are working part time with more than 30 hours, and according to the health care law those are full-time employees. So they have workers with more than 30 but who do not receive health benefits, and he says:

Are we supposed to lay off full-time teachers so that we can provide insurance coverage to part-time employees?

That is a question asked by the superintendent of schools in a town in central Connecticut. He says:

If we have to cut five reading teachers to pay for the benefits for substitute teachers, I'm not sure that would be best for our students.

The impact of this health care law and the mandate and the costs go way beyond the health care of an individual or a family or a community. It goes to so many other things, including the education of our young people. And those are some of the tradeoffs and the unintended consequences that have developed since passing a 2,700-page health care law.

Whether they delay the signup date to allow more people to sign up, as a doctor, my concern is for those people who do sign up, what kind of care are they going to get. Are they going to be able to keep their doctor, which the President promised. The deadline date is less important than the kind of care people can get with the insurance they are mandated to buy as a result of the health care law, and pay a lot more than they would have paid had the law not been passed. Will they be able to keep their doctor? Will they be able to see a doctor?

We know there is a shortage coming of about 90,000 physicians, half of them specialists, half of them primary care physicians around the country. This is coming in the next 5 or 6 years. We know the things that are happening along those lines with not enough nurses, not enough physician assistants, not enough EMTs, paramedics—across the board not enough people to take care of the population of this country. Having insurance is not enough to provide care.

The President made promises that are not being kept. That is a concern I have when I hear the deadline is extended. My concern is what happens after they sign up. Will they be able to get the care they need?

Last week, the Associated Press reported the results of a poll of all these different cancer hospitals. My wife is a cancer survivor, so I know how important it is for people to have the peace of mind to get the care they need. Of the 19 hospitals that responded to the Associated Press, only 4 of the 19 said, yes, they will be able to accept all of the plans of the people who are signing up on the Web site in those States where those hospitals are located. So it is not just a matter of keeping your own doctor, but it is getting the doctor you need at a time of family crisis, personal family concern—the time when people are most vulnerable. Will the

fact they have some coverage bought through a Web site actually help them get the care they need? And will the doctor who happens to see them—even if they are able to keep their own doctor—be able to spend the time interacting with the patient or, with all the additional paperwork and time-consumption activities, will the doctor have to cut the visit short, spend time looking more at the computer screen than looking at the patient? There are complaints in every State of the Union from patients who are complaining either to their doctor or the nurse at the office or at the checkout area of the office saying, you know, I would have liked to have had the doctor look more at me and not so much at the computer screen.

There are many components of this health care law that are harmful to health care delivery and to patient care in this country, and so the President decides to unilaterally delay a part of the law that this last week or the week before the Secretary of Health and Human Services said will not be done; this is the deadline; this is it. When is the law not the law anymore? When is it just Swiss cheese? When do you trust somebody, take them at their word? Words have meanings.

It is time for this President and this administration to actually realize the American people see what is happening. Each time they do a delay or do a change or do this or that, it has a huge impact on people's lives as they try to decide what to do and what matters and what doesn't matter under this administration. People are very disappointed as a result of the health care law. Those who were looking for something better haven't found it.

We still don't know how many people actually have paid for insurance. We may know how many went to the Web site, but we don't know how many of those who bought insurance through the Web site actually had their own insurance and got one of those letters—of the 5 million people who got letters of cancellation—canceling their insurance or how many were uninsured.

It looks as though the Web site doesn't even want to look into that. On the paper application there is actually a box to check off. It says: I didn't have insurance but now I am going to get it. The Web site left that off. I don't know if that was ineptitude on the part of the designers of the Web site or if it was left off or fell through the cracks in the disastrous rollout. I don't know, but it wasn't there. So the administration, which said our goal is that of the 30 million people who do not have insurance, getting them insured, will never know the answer to that. Then there is the question of who are these folks, in terms of young or old, sick or not sick. And we know of those eligible, only about 1 in 10 has signed up.

But the big concern is—regardless of some of these things the President is doing to delay this and let others sign

up or not sign up for a bit of time—what kind of care are they going to get? Whether they are insured through the Web site this week, next week, or the week after, what kind of care is going to be available to them? And what happens when they find the cost of the care—as for so many people I hear from in Wyoming—is much higher than they were paying before? And if they had a policy they liked—or are still finding, if they didn't have insurance—many of them still think the rates are unaffordable.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 3521

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I come to the floor again to try to move forward on a bill with near unanimous support. In fact, with regard to the actual substance of the bill, within the four corners of the bill, it has unanimous support because it would advance 27 community-based health care clinics for veterans in the VA system immediately, around the country, which would serve hundreds of thousands of veterans in communities that absolutely need this type of expanded community-based clinic. Two are in my State—one in Lafayette, one in Lake Charles, LA.

All of these community-based clinics—including the ones in Lafayette and Lake Charles—have been fully authorized by the VA and throughout the process. They have been on the books. We have been planning on them and moving forward with them for some time. But they have hit a series of bureaucratic glitches.

For the Lafayette and Lake Charles facilities in particular, first they hit a big VA glitch when the VA just screwed up—and those are their words, not mine—just screwed up in the letting process to put out contracts to locate land and to build or lease these facilities. Because of that bureaucratic mistake, the VA lost a whole year in the process in terms of moving forward with these clinics that are fully approved, fully authorized.

During that year of delay, out of the blue CBO decided to score how these clinics are financed differently than it ever did before. I won't go into the weeds, but suffice it to say that under this new scoring method, it created a scoring issue, which it never did before. Well, that was an additional hurdle and additional point of delay to which we had to respond. We overcame it with a

proposal that ensures the VA funds and handles this correctly so there is no scoring issue. The bill passed the House nearly unanimously. In fact, the vote in the House was 346 to 1. As the Presiding Officer knows, not much passes either body nearly unanimously, but this did with very widespread bipartisan support, 346 to 1. This is the bill which has come over here to get final approval.

With the addition of an amendment to help pay for any costs associated with the bill—and the amendment has been fully vetted and is supported in a bipartisan way—with the addition of an amendment, we have no opposition here in the Senate on the actual substance of my proposal, on moving forward with these 27 important VA clinics around the country, two of which are in Louisiana.

Unfortunately, the only objection that appears to reside here in the Senate is from the Senator from Vermont, Mr. SANDERS, who does not object to this bill as amended, who does not object to the substance within the four corners of this bill, but who simply wants his much bigger, much broader VA bill passed. I applaud his passion to advocate for it, but there is significant concern with that much bigger, much more complicated proposal. There are 43 Senators, including myself, who have very significant concerns about that proposal.

I think it is really unfortunate for him to block something where there are no concerns—it has been vetted, it has bipartisan support, and every conceivable substantive issue has been worked out—simply to hold that as hostage for a much broader bill that has concerns and opposition from almost half of the Senate, 43 Senators. So I hope we can avoid that, and I come to the floor to ask for unanimous consent.

I think the American people want us to work together. I think the American people want us to agree on things we can agree on. There is a lot to fight about, there is a lot to wrestle with, there is a lot to disagree about, and we should work on that stuff too, toward an agreement. I am open to doing so with Senator SANDERS. But in the meantime, I firmly believe the American people want us to agree where we do agree. Don't create disagreements that don't exist. They want us to move forward where we can move forward. They want us to make progress where we can and keep working on the rest.

In that spirit, I ask unanimous consent that the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of my bill, H.R. 3521, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that my amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SANDERS. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I appreciate the interest my colleague from Louisiana has on this very important issue. I agree with him that we want to expand VA health care, that we have run into a bureaucratic morass, and there are 27 facilities in 18 States that can and should be approved. If the Senator from Louisiana is prepared to join with me, we can pass his concern today or within the next couple of weeks, along with many other provisions the veterans community is deeply concerned about.

During the last government shutdown, it is not widely known but the truth is that we were 7 to 10 days away from a situation where veterans—disabled veterans, veterans who have pensions—were not going to get their benefits. The comprehensive bipartisan legislation that received 56 votes here on the floor—unfortunately, not the vote from my colleague from Louisiana but 56 votes, and we are working to get the 60 votes we need to overcome a Republican point of order, and we are going to get those 60 votes—makes sure we do have advanced appropriations so no disabled veteran will not get a check in the event of another government shutdown.

My colleague from Louisiana may or may not think that is an important issue. I don't know. I think it is an important issue. And I can tell him the reason the legislation I introduced has the support of the American Legion—and, by the way, 500 of them were here this morning at a very interesting hearing—has the support of the VFW, the DAV, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Gold Star Wives of America, and virtually every organization is because they understand that the veterans community has very serious problems we have to address.

My friend from Louisiana may or may not have concerns about making sure that every veteran gets their benefits in an expedited way and that we don't have this backlog. Our legislation addresses that. My friend from Louisiana may or may not be concerned that there are veterans who want to take advantage of the post-9/11 GI bill—which over 1 million people are now having advantage of—and are having problems with getting instate tuition. Our legislation addresses that. Our legislation for the first time makes sure dental care will be part of VA health care. Our legislation addresses the reprehensible situation faced by many women and men in the military who had to deal with sexual assault. We think they should get the care they need. And on and on and on.

So we have a comprehensive piece of legislation which is supported by virtually every veterans organization in this country. We received 56 votes—1 person was absent who would have voted for it—57 votes, and we are now working with some of our Republican

colleagues to make sure we get the 60 votes. And I say to my colleague from Louisiana, work with us. Bring some of your other colleagues on board. Please don't tell me this is too expensive. If it is too expensive to take care of our veterans, then let's not go to war in the first place.

So I give my colleague from Louisiana the opportunity now to do something really extraordinary, to do something the veterans' committee wants.

I object to the proposal from my colleague from Louisiana, and in its place I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 297, S. 1950; that a Sanders substitute amendment, the text of S. 1982, the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

If we pass this right now, we deal with the Senator's concerns and a lot of other concerns.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard to the request of the Senator from Louisiana.

Is there objection to the request of the Senator from Vermont?

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I object on behalf of 43 Senators, including myself.

Reclaiming the floor and reclaiming my time, I would say we all want to work very hard to help veterans. We all acknowledge that the health care and work claim backlog issues are extremely important. That is why I am very involved in all of those issues across the board. That is why, for instance, I am an active member of the claims backlog working group, working with the VA to improve that situation and proposing focused legislation. We all care very much about that.

But right now Senator SANDERS' comprehensive bill has significant concerns in opposition—43 Senators, over 40 percent of the whole body. I do object on behalf of myself and the rest of those folks. I do commit to continuing to work on those issues, but I also express real regret that when this body is very divided on the important details of that bill—and the details do matter—we don't come together on something we agree on, and we can't accomplish a few important steps at a time.

Perhaps Senator SANDERS thinks that if we do this, somehow it takes away momentum for his larger bill. I think that is nonsense. These 27 clinics in 18 States are important, but they are a trivial part of that broader bill. They are a trivial part of all of the proposals in that broader bill. I don't think it takes away any momentum in any way, shape, or form for that broader bill. I will continue to be just as committed and just as interested in VA health care issues and working down the claims backlog and everything else. These clinics are a tiny part of

that. So he doesn't lose any advantage. He doesn't lose any momentum. We could move forward on something we do agree on and build from there. I think that is more reasonable and more constructive.

There is literally no disagreement among any of us in this body about these clinics. I have worked hard with several other colleagues to address every question and every concern out there. The amendment at the desk erases some of those concerns. We have covered the waterfront on this clinics issue in particular.

I am very disappointed that we can't move forward as a first step and agree on what we agree on. We disagree on enough. Let's agree on what we agree on. Let's move forward on what we agree on and pass these 27 clinics and start that progress and certainly continue to work on important compromise on the much bigger piece represented by the Sanders bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to use leader time for a few minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the junior Senator from Wyoming has come to the floor several times recently talking about the fact that examples he and other Republicans have given dealing with ObamaCare, examples they think are bad, I call lies. That is simply untrue. I have never come to the floor, to my recollection, and said a word about any of the examples Republicans have given regarding ObamaCare and how it is not very good. But I have come to the floor—I think my friend, the junior Senator from Wyoming, must be getting mixed up about what I have said about the Koch brothers and what they have done regarding health care. But it is easy to get mixed up because I think it is hard to separate the Koch brothers from the Republican caucus, anyway.

Mr. President, I have asserted and I will continue to assert that the Koch brothers are trying to buy America, and they are doing it in a number of different ways. They don't believe in Social Security. They don't believe in minimum wage. They don't believe in benefits—unemployment benefits. They don't believe in environmental laws. As you know and read in the paper, they have a chemical plant. They were fined about \$400,000 over the last week or 10 days and ordered to pay about \$50 million to bring it up to standard because it was deleterious to the health of people in the area.

The Koch brothers are running false and misleading ads all around the country against Democratic Senators dealing with health care. Do they care about health care? Of course not. These are false and misleading ads, and they have gone so far as to have actors there pretending they are from the States,

and they not only have done that in one State; they used the same actor in different States. So the record should be very clear. Yes, I have called many, if not most, of the anti-Obama ads by the Koch brothers false and misleading because they are.

VOTE ON COOPER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there is now 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote on the Cooper nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Christopher Reid Cooper, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia?

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 100, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 84 Ex.]

YEAS—100

Alexander	Gillibrand	Murphy
Ayotte	Graham	Murray
Baldwin	Grassley	Nelson
Barrasso	Hagan	Paul
Begich	Harkin	Portman
Bennet	Hatch	Pryor
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Reed
Blunt	Heitkamp	Reid
Booker	Heller	Risch
Boozman	Hirono	Roberts
Boxer	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Brown	Inhofe	Rubio
Burr	Isakson	Sanders
Cantwell	Johanns	Schatz
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Carper	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Casey	Kaine	Sessions
Chambliss	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Coburn	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cochran	Landrieu	Tester
Collins	Leahy	Thune
Coons	Lee	Toomey
Corker	Levin	Udall (CO)
Cornyn	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Crapo	Markley	Vitter
Cruz	McCain	Walsh
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Durbin	McConnell	Warren
Enzi	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wicker
Fischer	Mikulski	Wyden
Flake	Moran	
Franken	Murkowski	

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON HARPOOL NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there is now 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Harpool nomination.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of M. Douglas Harpool, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Missouri?

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER) would have voted “yea.”

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 85 Ex.]

YEAS—93

Alexander	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Ayotte	Graham	Murphy
Baldwin	Grassley	Murray
Barrasso	Hagan	Nelson
Begich	Harkin	Paul
Bennet	Hatch	Portman
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Pryor
Blunt	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Heller	Reid
Boozman	Hirono	Roberts
Boxer	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Brown	Inhofe	Rubio
Burr	Isakson	Sanders
Cantwell	Johanns	Schatz
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Carper	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Casey	Kaine	Sessions
Chambliss	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Stabenow
Cochran	Klobuchar	Tester
Collins	Landrieu	Thune
Coons	Leahy	Toomey
Cornyn	Lee	Udall (CO)
Cruz	Levin	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Manchin	Vitter
Durbin	Markley	Walsh
Enzi	McCaskill	Warner
Feinstein	McConnell	Warren
Fischer	Merkley	Whitehouse
Flake	Mikulski	Wicker
Franken	Moran	Wyden

NAYS—5

Coburn	McCain	Shelby
Crapo	Risch	

NOT VOTING—2

Corker	Menendez
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The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON MCHUGH NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there is now 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the McHugh nomination.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I yield back time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Gerald Austin McHugh, Jr., of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania?

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 59, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 86 Ex.]

YEAS—59

Baldwin	Harkin	Murray
Begich	Hatch	Nelson
Bennet	Heinrich	Reed
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Reid
Booker	Hirono	Rockefeller
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Brown	Kaine	Schatz
Cantwell	King	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Levin	Tester
Coats	Manchin	Toomey
Collins	Markley	Udall (CO)
Coons	McCain	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	McCaskill	Walsh
Durbin	Menendez	Warner
Feinstein	Merkley	Warren
Franken	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murkowski	Wyden
Hagan	Murphy	

NAYS—41

Alexander	Fischer	Moran
Ayotte	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blunt	Grassley	Pryor
Boozman	Heller	Risch
Burr	Hoeven	Roberts
Chambliss	Inhofe	Rubio
Coburn	Isakson	Scott
Cochran	Johanns	Sessions
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Cornyn	Kirk	Thune
Crapo	Landrieu	Vitter
Cruz	Lee	Wicker
Enzi	McConnell	

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON SMITH NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Under the previous order, there is now 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Smith nomination. Who yields time?

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Edward G. Smith, of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 69, nays 31, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 87 Ex.]

YEAS—69

Alexander	Enzi	Lee
Ayotte	Fischer	Levin
Barrasso	Flake	Manchin
Bennet	Graham	McCain
Blunt	Grassley	McCaskill
Boozman	Hatch	McConnell
Brown	Heitkamp	Moran
Burr	Heller	Murkowski
Carper	Hirono	Murphy
Casey	Hoeven	Nelson
Chambliss	Inhofe	Paul
Coats	Isakson	Portman
Coburn	Johanns	Pryor
Cochran	Johnson (SD)	Reed
Collins	Johnson (WI)	Reid
Coons	Kaine	Risch
Corker	King	Roberts
Cornyn	Kirk	Rubio
Crapo	Klobuchar	Scott
Cruz	Landrieu	Sessions
Durbin	Leahy	Shelby

Thune	Vitter	Whitehouse
Toomey	Warner	Wicker

NAYS—31

Baldwin	Hagan	Schumer
Begich	Harkin	Shaheen
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Stabenow
Booker	Markey	Tester
Boxer	Menendez	Udall (CO)
Cantwell	Merkley	Udall (NM)
Cardin	Mikulski	Walsh
Donnelly	Murray	Warren
Feinstein	Rockefeller	Wyden
Franken	Sanders	
Gillibrand	Schatz	

The nomination was confirmed.

NOMINATION OF JOSEPH WILLIAM WESTPHAL TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the Westphal nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Joseph William Westphal, of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there is now 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Westphal nomination.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for perhaps more than 2 minutes or such time as I may consume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask my colleagues to recognize they have an opportunity now to support someone who is most deserving for the position of Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His name is Dr. Joseph William Westphal. While he is not an Oklahoma man, in his heart I think he is. He spent most of his time or much of his time in Oklahoma. He is a good personal friend of mine. He actually attended and graduated from the University of Oklahoma. Then he came back and was head of the political science department at Oklahoma State University—kind of an unusual combination.

Joe Westphal is one who has had a career in academia—and I don't really care that much about that, except for his two exposures in Oklahoma—but he also was the chancellor at the University of Maine, he taught public policy as the adjunct professor at Georgetown University, and he has been a Capitol Hill professional staff member for a long time. He actually was on the House Budget Committee for a long period of time. He was also a special assistant to our Senator THAD COCHRAN, although this has been some time ago.

In the executive branch, Joe served as the Army assistant secretary, then the Acting Secretary of the Army—that was 2001—and then as the 30th Under Secretary of the Army for the past 5 years.

As I say, he is a good friend of mine. What is different about him is, there are a lot of people who have a career, have a background in academia, but then there are the ones who have shown they also have a heart—they have a reason for what they are doing and they have a love for using the position they hold to help other people, and that is what Joe Westphal has done for a long period of time.

When Joe was Under Secretary—I think he was actually Acting Secretary of the Army—we were together in southern Oklahoma at Fort Sill. Fort Sill is outside of Lawton, OK, in the southwestern part of the State, and we had two schools down there, one called Geronimo and the other was Sheridan. Not Sheraton, like the hotel chain, but the Sheridan Indians, and we all know who Geronimo is. These were old schools. They are public schools, but the roofs leaked, and they had been around for a long period of time. The majority of the kids who went to school there are the sons and daughters of our military people. And because of his heart, for them, we went down together and we looked at this and saw something could be done to help these kids. So we put together—and he did through the Army—using it, perfectly legitimately, for the percentage of the population in the school who were actually the sons and daughters of military people, and we built a school that is now a model for schools and establishments that are in conjunction with large cities. It is something that now a lot of kids are very happy as they graduate from the Freedom Elementary School at Fort Sill, OK. Oklahoma has at this school 1,000 servicemember children. So we replaced the old one for them.

I also remember when we had a request—and I am sure the Chair knows, because he has made requests of the bureaucracy before, and sometimes it takes longer than it would be otherwise, longer than it should take—because we had a need in my State of Oklahoma for a museum to have an old Huey helicopter that had been used in the military many years ago. We tried everything we could to get that done, and one phone call from this guy named Dr. Joseph William Westphal, and it was done.

I probably shouldn't say this to my Democratic friends over here, but I have been such a good friend of his, I was afraid to express myself for fear President Obama might change his mind. But nonetheless he is now up for confirmation—I understand we are going to do that by voice vote—and I can't imagine anyone wouldn't take advantage of the opportunity to vote for Dr. Joseph Westphal to be U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Is there further debate?

If not, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Joseph W. Westphal to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

REMEMBERING KATE PUZEY

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the fifth anniversary of the tragic murder of a Georgia citizen who volunteered for the Peace Corps, who traveled to West Africa to the nation of Benin and lost her life. She lost her life because she did the right thing—she reported the abuse of children in a village school where she taught.

The reason I have recently returned from Benin is that I have taken this case on as a personal passion, to see to it that justice and some closure comes to the family of this wonderful young lady. Her name was Kate Puzey. Kate Puzey was top of her class, valedictorian, outstanding student, and she wanted to go out and save the world, to help the world and fulfill the dream John Kennedy professed in 1961 when he created the Peace Corps.

So Kate Puzey went to Benin and she found that one of the village natives in the village where she was teaching was abusing children in the school where she was teaching. In this very remote area, she took the only communication mechanism she had to report the violation of these children to the appropriate authorities in Cotonou, Benin. Unfortunately, because those communications were not secure, a relative of the person she reported notified the person she had reported that he had been reported. That night, in her hut in the Nation of Benin, her throat was cut and she died. She died because she did the right thing.

This Senate, 2 years ago, joined me and Senator BOXER in passing the Peace Corps Protection Act, which is now named the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act. This provides a mechanism and a way where Peace Corps volunteers can report violations or trauma of a sexual nature, gender-based violence, or any other type of violence against themselves or in any other place where they might be as a servant of the Peace Corps. Because of that, there are now ombudsmen and ways and mechanisms where

our Peace Corps volunteers can safely report violations and damage and have the protection not only of the United States but of the nation where they serve.

But back to the point of my trip to Benin, which took place this last week. This was my second visit to Benin, because what I want to see is a continuation of the investigation of the death of this young lady until there is a trial and closure available for her and her family, just as any of us would want were we the parent of a young lady who had lost her life on behalf of the United States of America.

I rise to pay particular tribute first to Secretary Kerry; to the United Nations' Samantha Power; to the State Department of the United States of America; to Michael Raynor, the Ambassador in Benin; to Todd Whatley, the Deputy Chief of Mission; to Kevin Armstrong, the USAID Director; to Billy Alfano, to Marilyn Gayton, and to Robert Freedom—Bob Friedman—the Peace Corps representative in Benin, all of whom have made the investigation and the fulfillment of bringing this case to a reality their top priority.

Three years ago, when I went to Benin for the first time, it was to encourage President Yayi of Benin to allow the United States to come in and assist in the investigation and the prosecution of the case—a rare thing to happen in a French colony which is governed by French law. To our credit and to President Yayi's credit he allowed the United States and Jennifer Dent, the FBI agent in charge in Lagos, to come in to Benin and begin assisting the investigation.

I went back last week during our break because it looked as though the case was dying. It looked as though the intensity of the interest was dying. And it was so important to me and for the family in my home State of Georgia to see to it we in some way finally bring closure, either right or wrong, for the terrible things that happened. I am happy to report the visit was successful.

President Yayi spent over 4 hours with the family members and myself. He committed the judiciary and the investigatory body in the Nation of Benin to accept the assistance of the U.S. FBI and our technology. During the course of our visit, he removed and separated the prisoners, as had been requested by the FBI, to see to it those who are being held and thought to be guilty in this case could no longer communicate in the prisons where they were held.

I don't know what the ultimate result will be, and I want justice to be done. I want the right person to be persecuted and prosecuted, and the right person to pay the price, but I want closure for this family.

I want to thank the American Embassy, the State Department, and Samantha Power at the U.N. for the intensity they have put into this inves-

tigation, as well as the U.S. FBI, and in particular Victor Lloyd, special agent in Lagos, Nigeria, for all the time he has dedicated. We seem to be at a point where everything is coming together toward a prosecution and, ultimately, a trial. When that happens, it will happen primarily because the U.S. Government, the people of the United States of America, both President Bush and President Obama, and all in this Congress have dedicated themselves to the interest of one child's life—Kate Puzey.

It is important the people of this country know that we as a body will come together behind any injured American, any loss of life, anybody who has deployed themselves on behalf of this country in the service of peace and prosperity. They deserve to know the U.S. Congress and this U.S. Senate are standing ready to help.

But I am here in particular to pay tribute to the Embassy of Benin, to FBI Special Agent Victor Lloyd, and to all those who have helped and assisted in seeing to it the prosecution of the case in the murder of Kate Puzey comes to a final conclusion. I am grateful for their service to America, grateful for what they have done for the Puzey family in Georgia, and grateful that I live in a country that protects and loves those who have represented our interests wherever it may be, on whatever shore it may be, and in whatever country it may be.

May God bless America, may God bless the Peace Corps, and may God bless the family of Kate Puzey.

I yield back, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as I speak, all over the country telephones are ringing. When the recipient of the call picks up, they are greeted by the friendly voice of a college recruiter from a for-profit college or university. It is easy to go back to school, this recruiter will tell those who answer the phone. In fact, we can sign you up for Federal loans right now.

That is the key. These for-profit colleges and universities target individuals who qualify for easy Federal money. Pell grants and GI bill benefits are preferred. And all the promises sound so good to those who are receiving these phone calls. After all, going back to school is supposed to be the path to success and more money in your life. But before they know what has hit them, these people who answered the phone call from for-profit schools and universities find out they are taking on more debt than they can even understand and may end up with a so-called education that is worthless.

That is what happened to Jaqueta Cherry from North Carolina. After trying a community college, Jaqueta was lured by the kind voice on the other

end of the phone and the fancy commercials on TV. She saw them in North Carolina. You see them across the United States. Get on a bus in Chicago and look around at all the signs trying to lure young people on those buses into for-profit colleges and universities.

Jaqueta said: The schools blew up my phone.

She enrolled at Everest College, which is part of the Corinthian College chain. The California attorney general is currently suing this chain of schools, and the Department of Education is investigating allegations that they lied to the Federal Government about their job placements.

In the meantime, Jaqueta's living situation changed, and she had to drop out and couldn't continue her studies at Everest. It wasn't long before she was tracked down by another for-profit school through a pop-up ad she clicked on, on the Internet. If someone is college age and gets on the Internet, they will see these ads bombarding them from for-profit colleges and universities. She got a call the next day from the Education Management Corporation's The Art Institutes and signed up for an online program.

After taking out more loans, Jaqueta found herself unable to continue her courses. Her roommate had moved out, left her with unpaid bills, and her only access to the Internet was a phone that was turned off 2 days prior to her final exams. At that point she was thousands of dollars in debt with nothing to show for it. Guess what. The calls kept coming. DeVry—the second or third largest for-profit school in the United States, based in Chicago, currently being investigated by the Federal Trade Commission for their advertising and marketing policies—called her, and then ITT Tech called her as well. They are being sued by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau for pressuring students into high-cost private loans.

The calls she gets from Everest and The Art Institutes these days are not the kind voices they used to be. "They're very mean and threatening," she says. Not surprising. You see, Jaqueta is no longer an ATM machine from which they can draw Federal dollars.

For many years for-profit schools were allowed to operate relatively freely and often one step ahead of the regulators. I am hopeful that with the investigations I mentioned and the many others that are occurring State by State, we may be turning a corner. We need to hold these schools—all schools but especially for-profit schools—accountable to taxpayers, who often subsidize up to 90 percent of their operations, and to students, who ultimately are their victims.

If we take all the Federal money that goes to for-profit colleges and universities and total it up, it is around \$20 billion. This private sector group would be the equivalent of the ninth largest Federal agency in Washington. They

survive on Federal money. The only thing different is, of course, their employees aren't Federal employees and their CEOs make more money than any employee of the Federal Government could ever dream of.

There are a lot of agencies involved in looking at these for-profit colleges and universities—Department of Education, Securities and Exchange Commission, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Federal Trade Commission, Department of Defense, and others. It is important that they work together.

This morning I held a hearing in my Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. In front of me was the Secretary of the Navy, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Chief of Naval Operations, and we talked about these schools. I can tell you in private what they told me. They are saddened at how many military families are lured into these schools and waste their GI benefits, going online to places called the American Military University—boy, doesn't that sound official. That sounds like the real thing. It is another for-profit school that just happened to pick a name which appeals to a lot of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

A nephew of mine was a doorman right up here. Then he served in the Army and was sent overseas to Afghanistan. I was so proud of him. He got home safely. Then he was sent to Korea. He came home safely. Now he is out of the Army. He contacted me once and said: I have good news for you. I avoided all those for-profit schools you warned me about, and I signed up with the American Military University.

He didn't know any better. He thought for sure that this was real. It is really not. I advised him that there is one university from his home State, the University of Maryland, which has been offering courses to the military for decades—and their hours are transferable when he comes home.

Oh, he said. I should have thought of that.

What the Navy told us this morning is they are now sitting down with the sailors and their families and saying: Think twice before you sign up for these for-profit schools. You are wasting your GI benefits on schools that could be worthless. Think twice about whether those hours are transferable when you get out of the service.

Sadly, there are too many American citizens—young people primarily and even members of the military—who were lured into these awful schools before anybody warned them.

Senator TOM HARKIN of Iowa and I are working on a bill we will introduce next week to ensure that the agencies currently investigating all of these for-profit schools are coordinating their efforts. He and I teamed up on this issue a long time ago. It is going to be a shame when Senator HARKIN retires from the Senate this year, but the for-profit schools should know that the spotlight TOM HARKIN turned on with

his committee hearings is going to continue even after he leaves.

An industry that receives more than \$25 billion in Federal dollars and has such a terrible record needs aggressive oversight. We don't owe it to just the taxpayers who are coming up with \$25 billion for these schools; we owe it to the students who are lured into these schools, lured into debt, and end up many times with nothing to show for it.

We need to keep three numbers in mind when we think about the for-profit colleges and universities, and I always warn people that these three numbers will be on the final, so listen closely.

Ten percent of the students who graduate from high school go to for-profit colleges and universities; yet they receive 20 percent of all the Federal aid to education because they cost twice as much. For-profit colleges and universities account for 46 percent of all student loan defaults. So 10 percent of the students, 46 percent of the defaults. Why? They charge too much, they lure these students deep into debt, and the students can't finish school or end up with worthless diplomas when they graduate.

The sad reality is that the Federal Government is complicit. We are complicit because we don't blow the whistle on these schools, which should never, ever—never—qualify for Pell grants and Federal student loans.

There is a kicker. Unlike virtually every other debt you can incur in life, student loans are not dischargeable in bankruptcy. I have had students \$150,000 in debt after 4 years in school and their lives are virtually ruined. They had no idea what they were getting into. When they were private loans, those loans grew geometrically whenever they failed to pay. Where are those students today? They are living in their parents' basement. They cannot afford to get married, they cannot buy a car, and if they get married, they cannot afford to have children. They certainly cannot afford to borrow money to go to a real college or university. They are stuck, and we ought to do something about it.

Student loans in this country are exploding. They are trapping generations of students such as Jaqueta in poverty, and they are hurting their opportunities for being full members in our society and economy. We have to address head-on these for-profit colleges which are a scourge on education. There are a few exceptions, but by and large this industry with 46 percent of the student loan defaults is shameful.

Chairman HARKIN is going to hold a hearing in the Senate HELP Committee this week on the student loan programs. I am going to work with him and submit some testimony. Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island and Senator ELIZABETH WARREN of Massachusetts and I are putting together a package of bills. We are going to address this issue from a lot of different perspectives.

There is no reason a college student should sign up for a private loan with higher interest rates and worse conditions for payback when they are still eligible for government loans which are more flexible and have lower interest rates. Yet some of these irresponsible schools steer their kids into private loans. The kids don't know any better, neither do their parents. Secondly, they end up loaning money to these students and to their families that they will never, ever be able to pay back. Senator REED says they ought to have some skin in the game. At some point if they have been overextended in loans, they ought to have to eat some of those losses when the students cannot pay it back.

Senator WARREN is tackling an even bigger issue about refinancing college loans. What is it all about? It is about giving a fair shot to these families and these students. We are going to talk a lot about this.

When I think of where I am today, it is because of my mother who checked my report card every 6 weeks and told me I could always do better and because of that I ended up in college and law school and here I stand. I borrowed money from the government to do it and couldn't have done it otherwise. So I believe in education, and I certainly believe kids from lower and middle-income families, when they need to borrow money, should have that opportunity. What is happening today is out of hand. The debt we are piling on students and their families is unconscionable, not just the for-profit schools but across the board.

On this side of the aisle we believe these students deserve an opportunity, and they shouldn't be saddled with a debt that can literally ruin their lives. We are going to be working on this issue as part of our effort this year to define what Congress can do to make this a better nation for working families across the board to make sure everyone—everyone—has a fair shot.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

We are 5 days away from the deadline to begin enrolling for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act—5 days for folks who don't have insurance now or want to see if they can find a better deal under their local marketplace or Federal marketplace under the Affordable Care Act.

We have heard the stories about the trouble with the Web site last October, but there are so many stories we haven't heard of people successfully signing up now for health care coverage. Those are the stories we want to talk about, in terms of the millions of people who are finding, in fact, for the first time they can have peace of mind, knowing they can find affordable health insurance and not only from a cost standpoint.

Every woman who is able to get insurance now knows she is not going to be rated differently and have higher costs from the insurance company just because she is a woman—being a woman previously was somehow a pre-existing condition—or if she is wanting to have a baby, she knows she can have her maternity care covered, which was not true for millions of women. In fact, going to the private marketplace prior to health care reform, about 60 percent of the insurance policies didn't cover something as important and basic as maternity care, unbelievably. So we are talking about people who are getting covered and people who have peace of mind, knowing they have affordable coverage and they can't get dropped if they get sick.

In fact, now going forward, if anyone has a policy, they cannot get dropped just because they get sick. Anyone who has cancer or diabetes—children with juvenile diabetes or heart disease—all of the various concerns and chronic diseases people have, knows they can find insurance; that they will not be blocked from getting medical care and health insurance because of a pre-existing condition.

So far over 5 million people have already enrolled in private health insurance plans through the new marketplaces, including over 144,000 in my home State of Michigan, people who are finally in a position where they have peace of mind at night, knowing they have health insurance for themselves and their families if somebody gets sick. If they need preventive care, they are not going to have out-of-pocket costs to get the cancer screening, the mammogram, and other preventive care.

In Michigan 144,000 individuals have signed up for health care, which is nearly 16,000 more people than was actually predicted at this point in time, because people want and need affordable health care. This is not a frill. We cannot control whether somebody in the family gets sick. Now there are things we can do to do our best to stay healthy, but we never know when something is going to happen, no matter our age or our circumstance. We all understand. We all want to make sure our children are covered, whether they are 3 years old or 30 years old. We want to make sure our moms and dads are covered, and we want to make sure we have coverage as a small business owner, that there is access to affordable coverage. People are signing up because this is personal for them and for their families.

I wish to share success stories of three of my constituents today. The first story is about LaNika, a 34-year-old volleyball coach from Flint, MI, who lived without health insurance for years while she focused on developing her career path. She didn't think she needed health insurance because she was healthy. One day she had an accident. She was playing volleyball, and she and another woman collided, leav-

ing her with a concussion. We all know head injuries are serious. So she had no choice but to go to the emergency room without having health insurance.

By the way, we all know that people who go to the emergency room without health insurance get treated, as they should, and then everybody with insurance—this is the way we have done it for decades—everybody with insurance sees their rates go up to pay for folks going into the emergency room, getting care in the most expensive way possible, which is going to the emergency room for care, rather than seeing a doctor.

In this particular case LaNika said this was her aha moment. After going to the ER, LaNika logged on to healthcare.gov to see if she could get covered. She entered her information, she compared plans, and she selected the best plan for her. She ended up selecting a silver plan from Michigan's largest health insurance company for less than \$100 a month because of her income level.

The whole process, she said, took an hour. She said that getting her insurance card was like a breath of fresh air because she knew that if disaster struck again she would be covered. Peace of mind, as they say in the commercials, is priceless. Now she can go see a doctor without worrying about a bill she cannot afford to pay.

Another constituent, Jim, from Shelby, MI, shared his story too. He had seen all the bad press, he said, on the Affordable Care Act on TV and social media and thought it wasn't worth it to sign up. He planned to sign his family up for COBRA coverage because he had worked and was going to sign up for COBRA to keep his former employer's coverage going but found out that wasn't an option. He decided to give healthcare.gov a try. After filling out his basic information, he saw how low his costs for good coverage would be and he signed up his family. Because he had such a positive experience, he began sharing it on Facebook so other people could see how easy it was to get covered. A recent post of his read: "There are only a few days left to sign up. Don't let this opportunity pass without taking a look," which is our message today. Don't let this opportunity pass without taking a look.

Another constituent, Bryan, from Okemos called my East Lansing office because he was upset that his health plan had been canceled. The replacement plan he was offered by his insurer wasn't affordable. He let us know how upset he was. He then asked what he was supposed to do.

We suggested he go to healthcare.gov to see if he could find a more affordable option that would meet his needs. He said he didn't have a computer. So we gave him the 1-800 number to call. He was skeptical, of course, that he would find a good plan. He expected to have to wait on the phone for hours to talk to somebody, but we encouraged him to give it a try.

He called the office back shortly with some good news. He had called the 1-800 number and someone answered right away. They were very friendly and helpful, he said. They helped Bryan find a plan that had better coverage than his old plan. On top of that, it was \$60 per month cheaper than his old plan, and he was able to add dental coverage too. He apologized for his first call.

We certainly understand that when people get those kinds of notices that the insurance they have has been canceled, of course everyone responds with panic and being upset with what is going on, what is going to happen to me. But the good news is that he was able to call the 1-800 number and, in fact, find better coverage that was lower priced and he is now also covered for important dental care. He said he is extremely happy with the Affordable Care Act.

LaNika's, Jim's, and Ryan's stories aren't unique. They are very typical. Despite all of the hype and all of the efforts that have gone on, they are very typical. It is important that people get beyond all the politics of health care, which for the life of me I don't know why we are not all working together to make sure people have the health care they need and the information they need—for all the politics that have come before, for people to get beyond that and just find out for themselves if it will work. Hopefully, it will and they will have the same kind of results that LaNika and Jim and Ryan had.

To everyone in America who doesn't have health insurance right now and needs to sign up but hasn't yet, there is less than 1 week to begin the process. Once you have begun, I want to make sure you complete it.

I appreciate the President's willingness to allow more people time to complete that process because health care is an essential in life that literally can be about life or death for a person or their family. I would suggest that folks not get left behind but get covered as LaNika, Jim, and Bryan did. It is quick, it will give you peace of mind, and we are hopeful you will find it to be something that is very good for you and your family.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank Senator STABENOW not only for her statement, but she has talked a lot about people she meets in her State and they say to her: Senator, all we want is a fair shot. Before Senator STABENOW leaves the floor I wanted to say I hear the same thing at home as well. When it comes to insurance all people want is a fair shot at affordable insurance. That is why we are here today. We are here to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Affordable Care Act.

I say for the record, we have millions of reasons in California to say thank you for the Affordable Care Act, and I will go through some of the numbers. We have exceeded our goals. We have

now signed up 1 million, and that is 300,000 over our goal. We now know President Obama has extended the signup period for those who are signing up on the national exchange. We are not sure yet whether California is going to extend its time. Anyone within the sound of my voice—those in California—need to know that we have not yet extended the time, so join the millions of Californians who have signed up through the exchanges.

Let's be clear: This is a real partisan battle. The House Republicans have been bragging about the 54 times they voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act, but I have to tell them before they vote again to tear this law down and vilify this law for the 55th time: Pay attention to the people in my State and all over the country.

I will go through the math of what is happening here. In addition to the 1 million people in California who have signed up on the exchange, we have 400,000 young adults who are staying on their parents' insurance policies and 1.8 million people on Medicaid. When I say we have more than a million reasons to say thank you for this law, we really do.

I have some other numbers to add to this. Eight million Californians now have access to free preventive care, including mammograms, birth control, and immunizations; 16 million Californians with preexisting conditions, such as asthma, cancer, and diabetes are guaranteed coverage—including 2.2 million children. California seniors and people with disabilities are saving money on prescription drugs—350,000, thanks to the work we did to close that doughnut hole, and 12 million Californians have new insurance protections and no longer have to worry about hitting annual limits on their health care.

I say to the Republicans: Wake up and see what is happening in your communities. Don't take my word for it. Listen to some of my Californians:

Just got my Obamacare Covered CA insurance plan. I'm ecstatic. Saving \$400 a month.

Another Californian said: "Loving my new health coverage, way to go California."

Another person wrote:

Just paid my first premium for Covered CA healthcare. A 42% reduction for a nearly identical plan.

Bobby Dutta from Sacramento writes:

I was being crushed by the heavy burden of health insurance premium costs. I had a PPO plan with Anthem Blue Cross and was paying \$1,324 per month for a family of two. Now, for a comparable plan through ACA, my premiums are \$61 per month.

Earth to Republicans: People are saving so much money because of the Affordable Care Act. They are getting peace of mind. Why would Republicans want to repeal a law that is helping so many people in California and across the country? I have never seen a law so vilified.

Today I went back to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—and I want to share

this with Senator MURPHY, who has organized this today. I thought this was the only law Republicans vilified, but I went back to take a look at when Social Security was debated and passed.

In 1935, on the floor of the House during the debate on Social Security, a Republican Congressman from Ohio said:

This is compulsion of the rankest kind.

That was how he talked about Social Security. He called it rank.

Do not be misled by the title. The title says "Old Age Benefits." Shame on you for putting such a misleading and unfair title on such a nefarious bill. Old-age benefits? Think of it! What a travesty! . . .

Another Republican Congressman from Pennsylvania said:

. . . security for the individual, whether worker or aged, will be a mockery and a sham if . . . [we] allot to our people the role of puppets of a socialistic state . . .

Doesn't this sound familiar? If you do anything for people, Republicans will call you a socialist. They call Social Security socialist.

He says:

We cannot provide a sense of security by programs for the destruction of wealth . . .

That is how he described Social Security. Listen, people pay into Social Security. It is an insurance plan. People pay premiums for their health care.

I have to say it: The Republicans are vilifying the Affordable Care Act just as they vilified Social Security and they vilified Medicare.

Let's look at what Republicans said about Medicare. In 1965 a Representative from Missouri said:

. . . we cannot stand idly by now, as the Nation is urged to embark on an ill-conceived adventure in government medicine, the end of which no one can see, and from which the patient is certain to be the ultimate sufferer.

I say to my colleagues: This is unbelievable. In 1965, the Republicans said that government medicine, which they called Medicare, even though you have a private doctor, would lead to patients suffering. If you ask patients who have Medicare now if they like it, they love it. Even the rightwing tea partiers who came to Washington had signs that said: "Hands off my Medicare." The Republicans vilified Medicare.

How about another one? A Republican from Wyoming had this to say about Medicare:

I am disturbed about the effect this legislation would have upon our economy and upon our private insurance system . . .

In 1995, Dick Armey, the Republican House majority leader, said that Medicare is "a program I would have no part of in a free world."

I want people to understand that when the Republicans vilify the Affordable Care Act, they are doing exactly what they did on Social Security and Medicare. They were on the wrong side of history then and they are on the wrong side of history now. And, of course, Newt Gingrich said Medicare was "going to wither on the vine." Well, it would, if Republicans controlled this place.

Senate Majority Leader Dole said in 1996, "I was there, fighting the fight, voting against Medicare . . . because we knew it wouldn't work in 1965."

Folks, there is a big difference between the parties. When you see the Republicans start to vote again to repeal the Affordable Care Act, that is what they wanted to do to Social Security and that is what they wanted to do to Medicare. We stopped them then, and we will stop them now. All they want to do is repeal all of these great benefits that are helping millions of people, and I say to them: Enough already. Enough. Work with us. Let's make sure everyone in America has that sense of security that they can handle whatever health impacts hit their families.

I thank my colleague from Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, we are here to point out that there are an awful lot of Americans who are winning because of the Affordable Care Act—whether it is a mom with kids who have gotten out of college but couldn't get health care on their own who can now stay on mom and dad's policy. That is one less thing for her to worry about—her 22- or 23-year-old children; that is a pretty big win.

Olive, who has been in touch with me, is a Rhode Islander from Woonsocket. She used to go into the doughnut hole every year because her husband has Alzheimer's and needs expensive medication. She saved \$2,400 in the first year alone. That is a significant benefit for Olive.

We have people who are trapped in their jobs because they couldn't get away. They were chained to their jobs because of the need of insurance. Alana, from Warwick, was one such person. She was working at one of our universities. She liked her job, but she really wanted to be a Web entrepreneur. She was tied to her job by employer-supplied health care. She went to HealthSource Rhode Island back in December and found a plan that worked for her. The plan's premium was so low she told me it sent her "over the moon." She has become the proud owner of her own Rhode Island small business because she had the confidence she could go forward. Stories such as Alana's abound not just in Rhode Island but across the country.

When I first came into our Rhode Island health exchange, the first person I saw who was ahead of me in line had boxes of Dunkin' Donuts and two big boxes of coffee. They had been there earlier in the afternoon, and the people who worked there were able to help them sign up for health insurance for the first time for their family. They were so thrilled they brought in doughnuts and coffee as a thank-you. That is the story we see.

I have to say that we have to look at what the problem was with health care. This is where we should be working together. Look at where the costs are

going; that is health care costs. In 1960, \$27 billion, and \$2.7 trillion in 2011. This was out of control. This was not going to be sustainable. Something absolutely, positively has to be done to get health care under control.

The unsung part of the Affordable Care Act is the part that begins the change in our delivery system reform so we can make our system affordable. Do we do it by taking things away from people? No. We do it by making the system better. How do we know that will work?

Here is a graph of all the major countries that are various kinds of competitors with us: Switzerland, Norway, Netherlands, Great Britain, Japan, and basically the rest of the major industrial nations. If you plot their life expectancy in years and their population against how much they spend per capita on health care, you get a pretty solid grouping through here, and you get a pretty clear curve that can be drawn through that.

Well, here is the U.S.A. We are way more per capita than the most expensive country—better than \$2,000 per person more per capita than the other most expensive countries in the world. Look at us for life expectancy. We come in around Chile and the Czech Republic, and we are below all of our competitors.

There is huge room for improvement—better health care at lower costs that will extend our lives and reduce the costs. If we just move back into this pack, we would save \$1 trillion a year in health care in this country—not just the government, but across the country. It would help businesses, it would help taxpayers, and it would help everybody.

There are different ways to do it. Here is one little example. This is people who are readmitted after they have gone into the hospital. What was happening was that after people got out of the hospital and went back to their nursing home or back to their house, their discharge plan was not very good. Their doctor may not have even known they were getting out, and they didn't know what to do with their medications. So what happens? Two weeks or a month later, they are back in the hospital again. We decided to do something about it in the Affordable Care Act.

This is the readmission rate. It was rocking along around 19 percent, and then along comes our bill in 2011, and it starts to drop. It starts to drop pretty dramatically. If we can keep that up, we save the money of all of those readmissions. You don't pay for a readmission that never happens. It is an absolute economic savings. Plus, the family doesn't have to worry about grandma going back into the hospital again and picking up a hospital-acquired infection or some other cost like that.

I thank the Senator from Connecticut, Senator MURPHY, for organizing us on the floor today.

I want to summarize that there is a great human interest story to tell

about the Affordable Care Act that is helping families not only in Rhode Island but across the country; and moreover, it is a great tool for us as I hope we can work together to improve our delivery system of health care so we are delivering better health care to Americans for a lower cost. We know we can do it. For crying out loud, if Greece and these other countries can do it, then by God so can the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE, who is an extraordinary leader on the issue of trying to control costs and improving quality. Senator STABENOW and Senator BOXER have been down here talking about the importance of the Affordable Care Act long before I got to this body, and I thank them for being with us as well.

Our message is pretty simple. Our message is that the Affordable Care Act is working. We know that because just yesterday we had record numbers of people who went onto the Web site to try to sign up for coverage. They placed calls into the call centers. We had 1.2 million people who went on the Web site yesterday looking for coverage. About 390,000 people placed a call.

We are seeing extraordinary levels of signups day after day. It looks as though we are on pace to achieve the goal to help those 6 million individuals sign up. That is not surprising because folks have been crying out in desperation for a better way for years and years. People such as one constituent of mine, Sean Hannon, from Weston, CT—I talked about him earlier on the floor today. He had a plan for him and his family that cost about \$1,400 a month. Under the Affordable Care Act and the Connecticut Exchange, he is now paying \$309. He wrote a really wonderful letter talking about what that means to him and his family, and he ended with this. He said:

We are sharing all of this personal information—

His family is sharing this personal information—

because there is an aggressive campaign underway to dismantle this valuable program. The misinformation being put out there is skewing public opinion and this must not happen.

Part of the reason why we have decided to come to the floor week after week is because Republicans who are spreading mythology about this law not working for people are chilling interest all across the country in signing up. Part of the reason why we are here on the floor is because there are Governors and State legislatures all around the country that are working to undermine the law rather than to implement the law. But in States such as California and Connecticut, that are actually working to make the law work, we are seeing record numbers of

people sign up, and we are seeing story after story such as the Hannonns.

In Connecticut, we had a goal of signing up about 100,000 to 120,000 people between Medicaid and the health care exchanges. Right now we have 170,000 people signed up. I don't know what our final number will be, but I imagine it will likely be double, if not more, of what our original estimate was. Why? Because we are actually going out and making it easy, simple for people to sign up. When we go out and make it easy for people to get affordable insurance, guess what. They want it.

Now that we are celebrating the 4-year mark of this law's being signed by President Obama, it is worthwhile to talk for a second about what the reality was before the law was passed and what the reality of the law is today because that explains why we are seeing this overflow of interest in this final week of signup.

Before the passage of this law, there were 3.4 million seniors who were Medicare Part D enrollees—that is the prescription drug benefit—who were falling into the doughnut hole. There was about 15 percent of those using drugs in that doughnut hole who were skipping or stopping medications when they reached that gap in coverage. The average senior could be paying out as much as \$160 in cost-sharing for certain procedures such as colorectal cancer screenings, paying lots and lots of money in preventive health care copays that had effectively stopped a lot of seniors from getting that wellness coverage they so badly needed.

So what has happened after the passage of the law? There are 7.9 million seniors who are now in the doughnut hole and saving, on average, about \$1,200 in drug costs. That is \$9.9 billion being saved by seniors because of the Affordable Care Act. Thirty-seven million seniors all across the country have taken advantage of the free preventive care, getting at least one free preventive service now that the law is in effect.

Let's look at the other end of the age spectrum. Before this law was passed, 31.4 percent of young adults between ages 19 and 25 lacked coverage. That was nearly double the national rate. We are seeing young people flock to sign up for these health care exchanges, but even before that, about 3 million young adults all across the country had gained coverage because the health care law allows them to stay on their parents' coverage until age 26.

Before the law, women often paid 50 percent more in premiums because of gender rating—the idea that one could be charged more as a woman simply because she is a woman. Put another way, being female was listed by many insurance companies as a preexisting condition. After the law, gender rating was banned, and women are on equity with men in terms of the rates they pay.

For middle-class families that have been struggling with health care costs because of a crippling illness, they now never have to worry about losing coverage simply because someone gets sick or not being able to afford coverage in the first place because of a preexisting condition. A world in which 60 percent of all personal bankruptcies were reported to be related to medical costs will be history in this country.

Four years after the passage of the law, that is the reality of what life was like before: Seniors paying thousands of dollars more in prescription drug costs, young adults unable to get coverage, women paying more for health care simply because they are women. The new reality is much different.

I imagine that is also why a new poll out this week tells us that 60 percent of Americans want to keep the Affordable Care Act in place. They may entertain some minor changes to the law, but less than 20 percent of Americans want to see this law repealed.

There is a total incongruity between what people out there believe, what they are experiencing, and what we are hearing as the reality from our Republican colleagues. That is why we are going to come down to the floor week after week and talk about how the Affordable Care Act is working for millions of Americans.

Finally, I wish to share one story because Republicans are very good at coming down and telling stories about people who have disagreements with the law. We are beginning to see an overflow of stories and anecdotes from people whose lives are being transformed.

Anne Masterson, from Norwich, CT, writes this:

Because of a minor preexisting condition, I was unable to get health insurance as an individual. I could get it through my business, my own law practice. I've always opted for good coverage, but I paid dearly for it. My premiums this year increased \$965 a month—equivalent to a second mortgage payment.

Let's just break that down. What she is saying is she could get coverage through her business, but she couldn't get coverage as an individual, and that was the real story for decades when it came to individuals who had a preexisting condition. For many of them, it wasn't a matter of just having to pay more for health care; they couldn't get insurance at all because of a preexisting condition, and that was the real world for Anne Masterson.

She further goes on to say this:

Part of my practice is representing children and the elderly in local probate courts. While not very lucrative, it's one of the most professionally satisfying things I do. I feel like I make a difference. However, with the increased premiums, I don't know how I could continue to pay for my health insurance.

Let's break that down for a second. Think of all the people all across this country who are stuck in a job simply because they have to get health care for them and their family. Think of all of the innovation that is being stymied

because people can't go out and start a business because it would involve taking the risk of going for a period of time without health care.

Anne was contemplating giving up work she loved, work she was good at, representing children and the elderly—maybe one of the most important jobs we have in our legal system—because she couldn't afford to pay the premiums on that salary.

She finishes by saying:

Under the Affordable Care Act silver plan, I'll have the exact same Anthem policy I have now—and pay nearly \$600 less per month. Not only will I have the peace of mind of having good health insurance, but I'll also be able to continue representing our most vulnerable citizens.

We should step back and try to think about what our job really is here. We get consumed with studies and numbers and data, but really our job is to protect the security of this country and to try to increase the quality of life for the people we represent. It is hard to sometimes measure whether we are doing a good job at increasing the quality of life, but it is really about trying to make sure the people we represent are happy.

Happiness comes in all sorts of different ways, but happiness had been stolen from millions of families across the country because every morning they would wake up thinking about how sick they were or how sick their child was or how sick their husband or wife was and their inability to pay for it.

We hear those words “peace of mind” come up over and over when people talk about the Affordable Care Act. Yes, they are getting better coverage. Yes, they are healthier, but they just feel better about their existence in this world because they no longer have to worry about being part of the 60 percent of bankruptcies caused by medical debt. They no longer have to worry whether their child is going to have to have their life dictated by the terms of their illness.

We can talk about the 5 million people who have signed up in exchanges all across the country or the fact that, as Senator WHITEHOUSE says, the Federal Government is slated to save \$1.2 trillion as compared to previous estimates on health care costs. We can talk about the \$9 billion that seniors are saving because of the Affordable Care Act when it comes to prescription drug costs. But if we really want to talk about the transformation in the Affordable Care Act, if we really want to read into all of these letters we are getting in increasing volumes, it is about the fact that people don't have to wake up every day worrying about health care, worrying about getting sick, worrying about how they are going to pay for an illness.

Maybe, in the end, when this law is fully implemented and ultimately Republicans come to this floor and defend it, just as they do Medicare, that will be the true measure of how the Affordable Care Act works.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UKRAINE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, tomorrow we are going to have an opportunity to vote on S. 2124, and I am pleased to learn that it looks as if there is going to be overwhelming support in the Senate for the passage of S. 2124. This is the legislation that helps Ukraine in dealing with the invasion by Russia.

Russia's illegal actions of using its military to overtake Crimea, a part of Ukraine, violate numerous international obligations that Russia has committed to.

I have the honor of chairing the U.S. Helsinki Commission. The Helsinki Accords were entered into in 1975. Russia was one of the leading forces for forming the OSCE.

Russia's taking over of Crimea violates its commitments it made under the Helsinki Final Act. It violates the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which was signed by the United States, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, and Russia, that guaranteed basically Ukraine's integrity of its land. It violates the 1997 Ukraine-Russia bilateral treaty. It violates the U.N. Charter. The list goes on and on and on.

So I believe it is absolutely essential that we have a strong voice in standing with the people of Ukraine. There was absolutely no justification whatsoever for Russia's action. There was no threat to any of the ethnic communities in Ukraine. All the rights of the people were being protected. The country was in transition from a corrupt government to a government that respected the rights of its citizens. If there was any provocation whatsoever of any unrest, it was caused by Russia's presence in Ukraine.

We got reports from the chief rabbi in Kiev that Russia was staging anti-Semitic provocations in Crimea, and the list goes on and on as to what Russia was doing in order to try to give some justification for its actions.

Russia's thinly veiled landgrab, cloaked in the cloth of self-determination, must not go unchallenged. Here is what I think is critically important: This is a dangerous precedent. We saw Russia use a similar action in Georgia, and now in Crimea in Ukraine. There are other territorial issues involved

around the world. If this goes unchecked, if we do not speak with a unified voice, it just encourages more irresponsible action by Russia in other countries.

We know that we have concerns about the South China Sea. We know we have concerns about Moldova. There are many other areas where Russia could be involved in its border areas.

So all of these issues are matters for us to speak with a strong unified voice. S. 2124 does that. It does it in two principal ways.

First, it imposes the sanctions against those responsible for Russia's invasion into Crimea, Ukraine. It provides sanctions so that these individuals are not permitted to come to the United States. There are economic sanctions in regard to the use of our banking system. These are similar sanctions to what are now being imposed by our European allies.

We need to isolate Russia. As we all know, the G8, which included Russia, is now a G7 without Russia. Russia needs to know that there will be sanctions imposed, and they will be stronger sanctions unless they stop this aggressive action.

In addition, the legislation provides economic assistance to the new Government of Ukraine. Just 2 weeks ago the Prime Minister of Ukraine was here and met with Members of the Senate. I tell you, it was inspirational to listen to his vision for Ukraine as a democratic, independent state, with full integration into Europe. That is important. He is preparing for a May 25 election for the Presidency of Ukraine.

These are all very, very positive steps. But if Ukraine does not have the economic foothold to be able to develop the type of economy and strength in their country, it will be difficult for Ukraine to be maintained as a viable independent state.

Here is where the United States and our European allies, and I hope the global community, come together, as we have in this legislation, to provide economic help on a restructured economic plan for Ukraine that will help them move forward in a very constructive way.

Mr. President, I must tell you I am disappointed, though, that the reforms of the IMF will be eliminated from this legislation. I think that is regrettable. We are entering into a plan for Ukraine that very much depends upon the IMF's—the International Monetary Fund's—plan to make sure that the moneys we are spending, Europe is spending, and other countries are loaning and providing to Ukraine are based upon a sound economic plan that will work. That is why the IMF is there. And they will be there. But the United States needs to be a full participant in the IMF. We are out of compliance, and here is another opportunity lost for us to be in full compliance with the IMF. I am disappointed about that.

But as I said as I took the floor, we must speak with one voice—the Obama

administration; the House, the Senate; the Congress—as we stand with the people of Ukraine for their integrity, for their independence, and for the adherence to international principles, which Russia has clearly violated.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, on October 16, 1936, President Roosevelt visited the then-largest city in Ohio, the town my wife and I live in, Cleveland, OH. He spoke about why the “trickle down” theory does not work—this whole view that has been tried a number of times in our country: trickle down economics—that trickle down economics does not work. That is when you give major tax breaks to the wealthiest people in the country.

President Roosevelt called them “economic royalists”—a term that sounds a little out of date but maybe fairly descriptive. But President Roosevelt said when you help the wealthy get wealthier and wealthier—my Republican colleagues call them the “job creators,” but it just does not work that way; the hope then is that some of that wealth they accumulate—and we do not resent their wealth, we do not envy their wealth; we just do not think it is good economic policy for Toledo or Gallipolis or Chillicothe or Cleveland—that when the wealthiest people get richer and richer, it does not really trickle down and create jobs.

Forget Franklin Roosevelt for a minute. Look at two decades in very recent memory—the 1990s during the Clinton years and the 8 years during the Bush years. From 1993 to 2000, the Clinton years, we actually reduced the budget deficit to the point where there was a surplus. There was an increase in taxes on upper income people and some budget cuts. But what happened during that 8 years is that 21 million private sector jobs were added to our economy between 1993 and 2000—21 million private sector jobs.

Then President Bush took office. Twice—once in 2001 and once in 2003—with the assistance of kind of a bought-and-sold special interest Congress in those days, President Bush gave major tax cuts to the wealthiest people in this country. You know the theory, “trickle down.” You give tax breaks to the rich and it trickles down to moderate-income, middle-class people and creates jobs. Well, the middle class shrank during those 8 years. President

Bush gave major tax cuts to the rich twice. Do you know how many jobs were created during those 8 years? Under 1 million private sector jobs.

So from 1993 to 2000 when we did not follow trickle-down economics, there were 21 million private sector jobs. During the 8 years of the Bush administration, there were big tax cuts for the rich—twice. There was essentially no real job creation in the private sector.

A number of my colleagues want to continue that policy. But let's look at it the other way. The real job creation is not tax breaks for the richest people, it trickles down, and maybe some jobs will be created for the middle class and for low-income people. Let's look at it the other way. Let's look at it as the real job creation is from the bottom up. One of the ways to do that is a minimum wage increase. It will not mean everything, but look at this. The minimum wage today is worth \$7.25 an hour nationally, in some States a little bit higher. My State is 90 cents higher than that, I believe. But the minimum wage today has one-third less buying power than it did in 1968. In 1968 a couple with minimum wage jobs—a husband and wife—actually had an OK standard of living. They were not doing great, but they were making it. They could afford to pay their rent. They could afford a car. They could afford some things. They were doing sort of OK.

The minimum wage today—again, a minimum wage job—has one-third less buying power than it had in 1968. But think about this: The minimum wage for tipped employees—I imagine a number of the pages who are sitting here today are not indicative; it is really older people generally who have had minimum wage jobs and have had jobs where they rely on tips. It is a myth that minimum wage jobs are held by mostly teenagers. They are not. Minimum wage jobs are often held by people supporting themselves, and they are supporting kids sometimes on minimum wage jobs. They are not teenagers or mostly in their twenties and thirties.

But get this. Do you know how much the tipped minimum wage is? It is \$2.13 an hour. That means when you see a valet at an airport—if you go to Cleveland Hopkins Airport and you see someone pushing a wheelchair with an often older disabled person in it, those are tipped jobs. Those people do not even make \$7.25 an hour. But they can make as little as \$2.13 an hour. Do you know the last time they got a raise, the last time the tipped minimum wage was raised? It was 1992. For 20-plus years the tipped minimum wage has been \$2.13 an hour. It has been that for 20 years. That means that the waitress in the diner, the server in the diner, the valet in front of the restaurant, the person pushing the wheelchair or driving the cart at the airport, the person working in the hotel, their minimum wage is \$2.13 an hour.

The people opposed to this minimum wage increase—to me, some of the most self-absorbed interest groups in this country and some of the best off—say: Well, nobody really makes that because people get these tips.

Well, if they work at a really high-end restaurant where the average patron will spend \$75 or \$100, buy a few drinks, where there is an expensive menu and all of that, the waiters do a little better. They make \$50,000 or \$60,000 or \$70,000 a year if they are busy enough and if they are working enough hours, some even more than that. But in the diner where three retirees will come in on a Tuesday morning and drink coffee and sit there for 2 hours and take up a table, that waitress is usually a woman who is a sub-minimum wage tipped employee. The people may leave \$1 on the table, and she has worked for 2 hours. All they buy is coffee, and she keeps filling it up and filling it up. Think about the wear and tear on her body. She is standing on her feet all the time. She is working hard. You know, we like to think we work hard in the Senate. We do, but we do not do that and it is not so hard on our bodies.

When I think about this minimum wage—I am never angry about politics. One of my heroes was Hubert Humphrey. They called him the “Happy Warrior” because he always fought for justice but he was not angry. But there are some things that make me angry about this job, such as when I see some of my colleagues—and there are a number of them—vote for pay increases for themselves and then vote against the minimum wage. They may tell you they work hard. They are not working harder than that person pushing the cart at the airport. They are not working harder than the woman in the diner who is filling the coffee cup.

I urge my colleagues to do something that Pope Francis mentioned. Pope Francis exhorted his parish priests to go out and smell like the flock. You think about the Biblical allegory of that, the sheep and the Old Testament and the shepherd. When he said “go out and smell like the flock” to his parish priests, what he was saying is pretty obvious: Go out and find out how they live. Go out and try to live among them. Go out and do what they do. Go out and understand their way of life.

I ask my colleagues to think about it. I am not asking them to live on a minimum wage job. I am not asking them to wait tables. But I do ask them to spend some time talking to people about the hopes and dreams for their children and in their lives, people who are minimum wage workers, people making \$7.25 an hour and working hard, people who are making less than that and rely on tips that may or may not be there.

It is justice. Are we going to reward work? If so, we ought to increase the minimum wage. At the same time, we ought to expand the earned-income tax credit. It actually rewards work. If you

are a trickle-down economics guy—and most of them are guys—and you believe that you reward people by cutting their taxes so they will work harder, maybe we ought to think about rewarding hard-working lower income people with tax breaks. For someone making \$28,000 a year, that extra thousand dollars really means they can maybe put a little aside for their kid's community college or maybe they can actually go out to eat once in a while or maybe they can occasionally buy a really nice dinner for their kids or maybe they can buy school supplies or whatever with that extra thousand or two thousand dollars from the earned-income tax credit.

We need to increase the minimum wage and the earned-income tax credit. It will not only be better for those families, it will help the economy because you put money into the economy. The unemployed worker or a minimum wage worker is going to spend that money. They are not going to invest it in a Swiss bank account the way some wealthy people might; they are going to spend that money, and that is going to create jobs in the local community. So increasing the minimum wage and expanding the earned-income tax credit is good for those families, it is good for those communities, and it is good for our economy. It is something we ought to do.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. I would ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNEMPLOYMENT EXTENSION

Mr. CASEY. Thank you very much.

I rise tonight to speak about emergency unemployment compensation. We know by the acronyms around here people refer to unemployment insurance as UI. What we are talking about in the real world are literally millions of Americans affected in one way or another because they have been out of work, unemployed for long periods of time.

By one estimate the number of Americans who have been out of work for 6 months or longer—and many of these individuals have been out of work for a lot more than 6 months, but when the line is drawn of 6 months or longer, it is more than 4 million Americans. It is a big number. I will talk a little bit more about the Pennsylvania impact and walk through some of those numbers.

This legislation that is finally coming together after many weeks is going to be, and I think must be, a bipartisan compromise. That is the only way to move forward. It is an effort to provide an essential lifeline—that is not an

overstatement and may be an understatement—an essential lifeline to middle-class families who rely upon the program to stay afloat as they are actively seeking work. I think what is sometimes lost in the discussion is these are folks who are trying to work, trying to find a job again.

I would have preferred a much longer extension than the one that is being discussed and worked on. I also would have hoped that people relying upon this type of compensation—emergency unemployment compensation—would not have to see their benefits lapse. Extending this program has always been bipartisan, and we need to make sure we keep it in that vein. While our economy has made substantial improvements, we have a long way to go. Families are still hurting and they need help.

Unfortunately, when families read the business page of their local newspaper, some of the numbers look pretty good. But if you are out of work for any period of time, especially 6 months or longer, it doesn't really matter what is on the business page or what the overall assessment is; it is very difficult for that individual or family because they are not working, and because they are not working they are not able to help their family.

We know that in addition to being the lifeline for families—an essential connection to any kind of economic security—the other reason it is important to have the emergency unemployment compensation passed is because of the economic boost it provides. Emergency unemployment compensation provides an economic jump start.

Just by way of example, in 2012, Mark Zandi, one of our more respected economists on both sides of the aisle, found that for every dollar of emergency unemployment compensation there was a \$1.52 economic impact—or new economic activity resulted. That is the old spend a buck, and what do you get for spending the buck? You spend a buck on this, you get a buck fifty-two in return. That is a substantial return on that investment.

Recent analysis specifically focusing on the extension of benefits in 2014 has also found a large economic boost. The Economic Policy Institute has estimated that extending unemployment benefits in 2014 would generate \$37.8 billion in economic activity. We know that this is an issue—unemployment, emergency unemployment or long-term unemployment—that varies depending on the State, but we know every State has been affected and almost every community has been affected in a very substantial way.

Pennsylvania is a big and diverse State with more than 12 million people. In some ways it tends to broadly reflect what is happening in various parts of the country. In Pennsylvania 73,300 people immediately stopped receiving unemployment benefits when the emergency unemployment compensation expired on December 28, 2014.

That was kind of the beginning of the current crisis for these families. They have been living through a very difficult economy for years now. They have been out of work for many months, and in some cases more than a year or two, but the current crisis started for them on December 28.

I can't even imagine what it is like for them. You are at the end of the holiday season, you are out of work, you have been robbed of your dignity and your ability to contribute to your family's well-being, and on top of all of that—in the middle of the holiday season when it is supposed to be a time of hope and optimism and gift giving and all kinds of family time—you, and perhaps another member of the family, lose your emergency unemployment compensation. That is where it started.

Because Congress didn't have a bipartisan consensus until recently, the days and weeks started to add up. So when you go from December 28 to March 1—and we can take another look at the numbers—unfortunately, and not surprisingly, those numbers went up. As of March 1, 105,000 Pennsylvanians lost their benefits. It gets worse than that. If it continues, and there is not some relief provided through May—and this is the period that would be covered by the bill—it is estimated that 158,400 Pennsylvanians and some 2,795,300 Americans who could benefit from this bill will lose their unemployment compensation.

It is very simple in terms of the choice we have to make. We need to decide in the very near future—we hope starting this week so we can begin the process of finally getting this done—whether we will help almost 2.8 million Americans and almost 160,000 Pennsylvanians. It is a very simple choice. We are going to take either one path or the other. I hope and pray we take the path that helps those almost 3 million Americans and almost 160,000 Pennsylvanians.

Earlier I mentioned the economic impact of passing this kind of legislation. We know that in Pennsylvania, for example, one estimate shows that extending benefits would provide a boost to consumption and economic activity which would save an estimated 15,000 jobs. That is another way to measure the impact of this program.

It is my hope that the Senate can swiftly pass this bipartisan legislation to extend emergency unemployment compensation and that the House will take it up and pass it without delay. We can't allow politics to stand in the way of helping families in need.

This is a basic and fundamental issue. These families and individuals have waited far too long. I will conclude with just one example. A couple of Sundays ago—maybe 3 weeks ago—I was walking out of church in our neighborhood and a woman came up to me. I didn't know her, but I recognized her from the neighborhood. She asked me about this issue. She said: I'm out of work; when do you think it will

pass? She asked me the same question a couple of weeks before that. I said: I think we are getting to the point where there is a consensus. On that particular Sunday—just a couple of weeks ago—she asked me again. When she started to ask the question, she asked it with a seriousness and an earnestness and a kind of worry in her voice that caught my attention. I said something like: I think we are starting to get there, but I can't say for sure when. When I gave that answer, she looked at me and she started to become very emotional and said: I hope you are reaching the point where you can pass something because it is going to be very difficult for me to hang on any longer.

This is very tough. I felt at that moment—as an elected official who was given power by the voters to vote and represent them—if not powerless, I was not doing nearly enough for her. I am part of an institution that has not come together yet—in the Senate and in the other body as well. We have not come together to answer her question with full confidence and to say: Yes, we understand. We understand what you are up against to the extent we can—not having lived through this ourselves—and we are going to act this week or tomorrow or the next day.

Not having a specific answer for her gave me a sense of not just frustration but a sense of failure. There was a sense of urgency that she brought to my attention, and I believe almost every Member here could probably tell a similar story.

We have to act. We have to get this done, and we have to make sure we undertake every effort in the next few days—and I hope we are talking days now—to get this done so we can finally provide a measure of relief which is short term but will have the effect of providing a measure of relief to families who have suffered in ways I can't even imagine.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JOHN B. OWENS TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 573.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of John B. Owens, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of John B. Owens, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Bill Nelson, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Jack Reed, Tammy Baldwin, Jon Tester, Tom Udall, Bernard Sanders, Michael F. Bennet, Christopher A. Coons, Elizabeth Warren, Charles E. Schumer, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Blumenthal, Richard J. Durbin.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, is the motion to proceed to H.R. 3979 now pending?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to proceed is now pending.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, that being the case, I have a cloture motion that has been filed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 333, H.R. 3979, an act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Harry Reid, Jack Reed, Patty Murray, Bill Nelson, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tammy Baldwin, Jon Tester, Tom Udall, Bernard Sanders, Michael F.

Bennet, Christopher A. Coons, Elizabeth Warren, Charles E. Schumer, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Blumenthal, Richard J. Durbin, Patrick J. Leahy.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following disposition of H.R. 4152, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 689; that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid on the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week I had the privilege of chairing a field hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee in Rutland, VT. The committee received powerful testimony about community solutions to breaking the cycle of addiction to heroin and other opioids. The hearing marked the fourth time in the past 6 years that the Judiciary Committee traveled to Vermont to explore issues related to drug abuse. As in many States, opioid addiction has ripped through parts of Vermont. Overdoses have reached record levels, while communities have struggled to keep pace with the demand for treatment. Sadly, this story is not unique. We are confronting a localized problem with regional echoes and national implications. Some of what we face is similar to the addiction outbreaks in large cities, and other aspects are particular to rural areas.

What struck me in Rutland last week is how Vermonters have worked together—and are continuing to work together—to get ahead of this problem, with innovative prevention, treatment, and law enforcement strategies.

The city of Rutland has an important story to tell. Its addiction crisis has received national attention. But I brought the Judiciary Committee to Rutland not to explore the horrors the city once faced; rather, I wanted us to

learn how the people of Rutland are reclaiming their community, block by block. One effort that has shown great promise is Project VISION—Viable Initiatives and Solutions through Involvement of Neighborhoods—developed by city and community leaders to address the many issues related to opioid abuse: addiction and treatment, prevention, quality of life, and crime and safety issues.

The chief of the Rutland Police Department, James Baker, testified at the hearing. Chief Baker explained that the police department for the first time is housing social workers, a domestic violence advocate, a mental health specialist, an early intervention coordinator, an assistant attorney general, a school resource officer, a crime analyst, and a building inspector. All are working in concert toward one goal: “Not on our streets; not in our town.” When Chief Baker asked how many in the audience were connected with Project VISION, over half of the standing-room-only audience raised their hands. Project VISION has proven adept at pursuing emerging, community-driven strategies. Just this week, community leaders and police in Rutland are considering implementing drug market intervention. This is a promising tactic designed to clear neighborhoods of nonviolent street-level dealers by bringing them in front of community leaders and giving them a stark choice: Stop selling today or go to jail tomorrow. Rutland has clearly risen to the challenge of combatting heroin and opioid abuse.

Other witnesses at the hearing described communities in action, working together to find inventive and tailored solutions. The U.S. attorney for Vermont, Tristram Coffin, who has had remarkable success leading enforcement efforts in the State, described how he has taken the message of prevention to Vermont schools, partnering with the father of a young man who tragically died of a heroin overdose. Dr. Harry Chen, the Vermont Department of Health commissioner and a career emergency room physician, described what it means to recognize addiction as a public health issue, expanding access to prevention and treatment services to all corners of the state. Mary Alice McKenzie, director of the Boys & Girls Club in Burlington, made clear how important it is to provide young people early and safe alternatives to drug use. The director of the Vermont State Police, Colonel Tom L'Esperance, described how State police will soon carry naloxone, a drug that immediately reverses the effects of a heroin overdose. Addicts in Vermont now know that police are not just there to arrest but to save lives.

It is important that the Judiciary Committee hear about a range of experiences, as opioid addiction has plagued communities large and small, rural and urban. This is why I encouraged all Vermonters to submit testimony on strategies to curb addiction, which will

be incorporated into the permanent record of the U.S. Senate. The response was remarkable. We received testimony from law enforcement officers, first responders, substance abuse counselors, doctors, public health officials, mental health practitioners, professors, school counselors and teachers, concerned parents, Governor Peter Shumlin—who is sharply focusing his administration on these problems—and many, many others.

Taken together, the testimony submitted to the committee offers a blueprint for communities ready to get ahead of addiction. It is clear that success requires community investment. Only after a community identifies addiction as a problem can it commit to defeating it. This is where Vermont is ahead of the curve. We tend to come from close-knit communities in Vermont. When we hear about victims of overdoses, and concerns about a growing problem, nearly all Vermonters can name someone who is affected. I suspect that is why we have had a number of excellent initiatives already enacted—it did not take long for heroin and opioid abuse to affect all Vermonters. And it did not take long for Vermont to take steps to resolve the problem. Nowhere is this more evident than in Rutland.

It is equally clear from the submitted testimony that success requires close collaboration among prevention, treatment, and law enforcement efforts. From my years as a Vermont prosecutor, I recall how important such collaboration is, but never have I seen a law enforcement community as committed to prevention and treatment efforts as I do now. We know we cannot arrest our way out of this problem. If the underlying cause of criminal behavior is an addiction, treatment is often a more humane and cost-effective alternative to arrests and prison.

As we continue to review testimony submitted to the committee, I look forward to working with other members of the Judiciary and Appropriations Committees to ensure that these community-driven responses receive the support necessary to succeed. I will continue to work to fund youth mentoring and prevention organizations on the front lines, like the Boys & Girls Clubs, and I will continue to work to fully fund Byrne-JAG and COPS grants to enable law enforcement agencies to devote the necessary time and resources to develop durable solutions with community partners. We also need to continue to support drug court and diversion models to substitute treatment for prison when appropriate. Many programs funded through the Second Chance Act provide offenders a real opportunity to succeed once released from prison by ensuring they have the resources to become productive members of their community.

I also look forward to discussing effective law enforcement strategies and partnerships with Michele Leonhart,

Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Agency, when she comes before the Judiciary Committee next month.

We all understand that the ability of the Federal Government to provide any assistance is increasingly challenged in light of our burgeoning prison population, which is largely driven by inflexible and unfair drug mandatory minimums. Federal prison and detention costs have risen to account for nearly one-third of the budget for the Department of Justice. This unsustainable growth in our prison costs siphons resources from other crucial law enforcement priorities every year. It is vital that Congress pass our bipartisan Smarter Sentencing Act, which would make modest reductions to mandatory minimums for non-violent drug offenses and help preserve funding for assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies and to victim services.

Addiction to heroin and other opioids is a community problem, demanding community solutions. I can report that Vermonters have stepped up to this challenge. Obstacles remain, but Vermont communities have rallied to develop lasting solutions and get ahead of addiction. After seeing this commitment firsthand, I left Rutland hopeful. And very proud.

DEVELOPING EUROPE'S ENERGY SUPPLIES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I wish to call for new aid to Eastern Europe to strengthen our allies in the face of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that we can do this by immediately increasing our export of domestically produced and processed liquefied natural gas. I have been cautiously optimistic on the domestic production of this energy source, relying heavily on the need for the environmental regulation of such activities. But in the case of Eastern Europe there is little that we can do domestically to quickly help their situation.

For more than a century, America's real power has been exporting the keys to economic growth and security. Therefore, it is time to do something real to bolster Europe's energy security by helping them develop Eastern Europe's substantial natural gas reserves and reduce the leverage Russia has over its energy dependent neighbors.

The most powerful tool the United States can give Eastern Europe is not exported natural gas that will not get to Europe for years, if ever. It is empowering our European allies to develop their own energy resources, like the major shale gas deposits in Poland.

It is clear that energy—and natural gas in particular—is at the very heart of Russia's influence over that part of the world. Europe is dependent on Russia for nearly one-third of its natural gas. And while countries in Western Europe have had some success in diver-

sifying their energy supplies, as former State Department Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs David Goldwyn testified yesterday, Eastern Europe is still heavily dependent upon Russia for energy.

Russia is not above using that dependence as a hammer and has been eager to remind us of that fact. For instance, Moscow shut off the gas lines in 2006 and again in the winter of 2009, leaving millions temporarily without heat. In 2013, when the country of Moldova sought to pursue stronger ties with Europe, Russia's deputy prime minister issued a barely veiled threat to the Moldovans, saying "we hope you will not freeze."

As I noted, some have suggested the answer to this problem is to automatically approve natural gas exports from the United States.

This position simply ignores the facts about how the gas market actually works.

U.S. LNG facilities are not slated to come online until the end of next year, at the earliest, while any new approvals would not provide any natural gas exports for at least several years. Further, unless Congress directed exports to go to Ukraine, the gas would go to the country paying the highest price, which would likely be in Asia.

I support the Energy Department's current, measured process for considering export requests. The Energy Department has already approved more than 9 billion cubic feet per day of exports, which exceeds what most analysts believe is the current international market for U.S. natural gas. It is helping our European allies bolster their energy security by developing the major shale gas deposits in Poland and elsewhere.

United States entrepreneurs triggered the shale revolution with a combination of innovation and technical know-how. This created tens of thousands of jobs and produced stable energy supplies that are 50 percent cleaner than traditional fossil fuels. It helped us with our energy security and it can do the same for Europe.

That is exactly what we should be doing to help NATO allies that are justifiably worried following Russia's illegal actions in Ukraine.

So what I am proposing today is to increase funding for a State Department program that helps spur natural gas development abroad. My common-sense amendment would direct \$10 million within the Economic Support Fund toward the Unconventional Gas Technical Engagement Program to help Eastern European countries develop the regulations and technical expertise they need to access their own gas.

Let me be clear—this assistance would go to countries, like Poland, that have asked for American help to harness their own gas reserves. I am aware that Europe is having its own debate about shale gas, and this amendment would not force any nation

to participate. In doing so, it will help our European allies throw off the yoke of dependence on Russian gas.

I want to be clear that this amendment cannot free Eastern Europe from Russian influence. Russia has other ways of bullying its neighbors economically. Moscow temporarily banned imports from Ukraine, for example, and it also banned imports of Moldovan wine—a very significant part of Moldova's economy.

This is clearly only one step of many needed to send a message to President Putin. But as the former chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee I know that a stable energy supply is the lifeblood of any economy and a very important component to a secure nation.

I believe there is bipartisan support for America to give our allies the tools they need to become more secure and less dependent on the whims of Mr. Putin.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. MURRAY W. WEST

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to honor Baltimore physician Murray W. West, a valued member of Maryland's medical community. At the end of this month, Dr. West, a family physician, will retire from clinical practice after more than 30 years.

Born in Washington, DC, on September 11, 1954, Murray West moved to Philadelphia at age 10. From 1975 to 1976, he attended Queen Mary College in London, and he was awarded a bachelor of science degree from Antioch College in 1977.

A 1981 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Dr. West completed his residency in family practice at the Georgetown University Department of Family Medicine here in Washington, DC. After 3 years with the Indian Health Service in Yuma, AZ, Dr. West moved to Maryland, where he earned a master of public health degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in 1993. Since 1986, he has treated patients exclusively at nonprofit health centers in our State—Arundel Village, Washington Village, Peoples Community, and the Belair-Edison Family Health Center, where he served as medical director from 2001 until 2007.

On Thursday, March 28, family members, colleagues, and friends will gather to celebrate this committed practitioner whose career epitomizes dedication to public health and quality care. I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in wishing Dr. West all the best in his retirement.●

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT SAMUEL L. JOHNSON

• Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I wish to recognize and pay tribute to

CMSAF Samuel L. Johnson on the occasion of his retirement from the U.S. Air Force.

Chief Johnson has given much to this Nation through his dedicated and selfless service. His Air Force career started in the great State of Georgia on December 21, 1984, following his graduation from Echols County High School near Statenville. When Chief Johnson began his career, he got exactly what he asked for—the ability to see the world. His first assignment took him to the United Kingdom, where he laid the foundation for a tremendous career as a security policeman. His career would take him to the ICBM fields of Wyoming, followed by his first tour in the Republic of Korea. Chief Johnson would then end up in the United Kingdom once again, then to the Emerald Coast of Florida, followed by his first tour in Texas. He would spend a couple of years in our Nation's Capital before heading back to Korea. He would then return to the States, landing himself his first tour in south Georgia. Long from ending his travels, Chief Johnson would take one more assignment to Texas, followed by a year in Qatar. Finally, Chief Johnson landed back in south Georgia for his second assignment there, which would be his last assignment in the Air Force. During his career, along with all of the aforementioned permanent duty station changes, Chief Johnson deployed in support of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn. Chief Johnson sewed on his final stripe, earning him a spot in the top 1 percent of all enlisted members of the military allowed by law, on September 1, 2009.

Chief Johnson is the recipient of the following major medals and decorations for his service and accomplishments: two Bronze Star Medals, five Meritorious Service Medals, four Air Force Commendation Medals, four Air Force Achievement Medals, the Air Force Combat Action Medal, the Air Force Combat Readiness Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Korean Defense Service Medal, and the NATO Medal.

Throughout his distinguished career he has represented our country and the Air Force with dignity and honor. On behalf of the Senate and the United States of America, I thank CMSAF Samuel L. Johnson for his service and sacrifices over the past 30 years. I wish him Godspeed and continued happiness as he starts a new chapter in his life.●

LIHEAP ACTION DAY

● Mr. REED. Mr. President, today is National LIHEAP Action Day. Advocates from many different States are here to make the case for the Low In-

come Home Energy Assistance Program, known as LIHEAP. This important initiative helps low-income Rhode Island families and millions of vulnerable Americans across the country pay their energy bills. Simply put, access to affordable home energy is a matter of health and safety for many low-income households, children, and seniors.

In Rhode Island this year, LIHEAP provided roughly \$24 million, which allowed the State to deliver assistance to 27,700 households. However, despite bipartisan efforts that I have led with my colleague from Maine, Senator COLLINS, to press for robust support for the program, funding reductions in 2011 and 2012, along with sequester cuts, have led to a decrease in the number of households served. As a result, nearly 1.5 million vulnerable households have lost access to this vital lifeline.

With one of the harshest winters in decades and the high cost of energy experienced in some regions of the country, including high natural gas and heating oil prices in New England, the importance of the LIHEAP program is even more pronounced. According to the Energy Information Administration, the average cost of home heating this winter will rise to nearly \$1,000 on average, a 6 percent increase over last year. These cost increases are happening at a time when households are receiving lower benefits. The average LIHEAP payments have been reduced by more than \$100 since 2010, dropping from \$520 in fiscal year 2010 to \$406 in fiscal year 2013.

I urge my colleagues to recognize the need to provide access to affordable home energy for the most vulnerable households in our States and join me in support of LIHEAP. This assistance is an indispensable lifeline, helping to ensure that recipients do not have to choose between paying their energy bills and affording other basic necessities such as food and medicine.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:05 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2824. An act to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to stop the ongoing waste by the Department of the Interior of taxpayer resources and implement the final rule on excess spoil, mining waste, and buffers for perennial and intermittent streams, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 5:06 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 4275. An act to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Internal Revenue

Code of 1986 to provide for cooperative and small employer charity pension plans.

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 2157. A bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare sustainable growth rate and to improve Medicare and Medicaid payments, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4983. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Herring Fishery; Amendment 5" (RIN 0648-AY47) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4984. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area; Amendment 102" (RIN 0648-BD03) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4985. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska; Amendment 95 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish" (RIN 0648-BC39) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4986. A communication from the Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Atka Mackerel in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area" (RIN0648-XD125) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4987. A communication from the Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Trip Limit Reduction" (RIN0648-XD134) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2014; to the

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4988. A communication from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries off West Coast States; Modifications of the West Coast Commercial and Recreational Salmon Fisheries; Inseason Actions #12 Through #34" (RIN0648-XC964) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 5, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4989. A communication from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2013 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for South Atlantic Vermilion Snapper" (RIN0648-XC984) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 5, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4990. A communication from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Shrimp Fishery off the Southern Atlantic States; Closure of the Penaeid Shrimp Fishery off South Carolina" (RIN0648-XD122) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4991. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zone: Maintenance Dredging 35-Foot Channel and Rock Removal; Portland Harbor, Portland, ME" (RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2014-0010) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4992. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zones; Eleventh Coast Guard District Annual Fireworks Events" (RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2013-0362) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4993. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zone; Havasu Triathlon; Lake Havasu, AZ" (RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2014-0004) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4994. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zones; Annual Events Requiring Safety Zones in the Captain of the Port Lake Michigan Zone" (RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2013-1033) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4995. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Terrebonne Bayou, LA" (RIN1625-AA09) (Docket No. USCG-2013-1072) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on

March 6, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4996. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Inner Harbor Navigational Canal, New Orleans, LA" (RIN1625-AA09) (Docket No. USCG-2013-0562) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4997. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Great Lakes Pilotage Rates—2014 Annual Review and Adjustment" (RIN1625-AC07) (Docket No. USCG-2013-0534) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4998. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Regulated Navigation Area; Southern Oahu Tsunami Vessel Evacuation Honolulu, HI" (RIN1625-AA11) (Docket No. USCG-2012-0080) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4999. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Importation of Jackfruit, Pineapple, and Starfruit From Malaysia Into the Continental United States" (RIN0579-AD46) (Docket No. APHIS-2011-0019) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 19, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-5000. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Iponazole; Pesticide Tolerances" (FRL No. 9907-25) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 19, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-5001. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Heat-killed *Burkholderia* spp. Strain A396 Cells and Spent Fermentation Media; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance" (FRL No. 9907-41) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 19, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-5002. A communication from the Acting Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting the report of ten (10) officers authorized to wear the insignia of the grade of major general or brigadier general in accordance with title 10, United States Code, section 777; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-5003. A communication from the Chairman, Nuclear Weapons Council, Department of Defense and Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the nuclear stockpile and stockpile stewardship program requirements for fiscal year 2015 and over the next four years; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-5004. A communication from the Acting Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting, pursuant to law, a

report describing activities under the Secretary of Defense personnel management demonstration project authorities for Department of Defense Science and Technology Reinvention Laboratories (STRILs) for calendar year 2013; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-5005. A communication from the Director, Joint Staff, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report of a delay in submission of a report relative to construction requirements related to antiterrorism and force protection or urban training requirements; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-5006. A communication from the Secretary of the Navy, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Program Acquisition Unit Cost (PAUC) and Average Procurement Unit Cost (APUC) for the Joint Precision Approach and Landing System (JPALS) Increment 1A program; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-5007. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Legislative Affairs), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to Department of Defense (DoD) programs, policies, and procedures regarding security at Department of Defense installations and the security clearance process; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-5008. A communication from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs), transmitting, pursuant to law, the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report (NGRER) for fiscal year 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-5009. A communication from the Acting Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Department of Defense's Evaluation of the TRICARE Program for fiscal year 2014; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-5010. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs) transmitting, pursuant to law, the 2014 Department of Defense Annual Report to Congress on Chemical and Biological Defense; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. LEVIN for the Committee on Armed Services.

*Eric Rosenbach, of Pennsylvania, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

*David B. Shear, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

*Michael J. McCord, of Ohio, to be Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller).

*Robert O. Work, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Christine E. Wormuth, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

*Air Force nomination of Gen. Paul J. Selva, to be General.

Air Force nomination of Maj. Gen. Anthony J. Rock, to be Lieutenant General.

Air Force nomination of Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Trask, to be Lieutenant General.

Air Force nomination of Col. Andrew J. Toth, to be Brigadier General.

Air Force nomination of Lt. Gen. Darren W. McDew, to be General.

Air Force nomination of Lt. Gen. Bradley A. Heithold, to be Lieutenant General.

Air Force nomination of Col. Robert I. Miller, to be Brigadier General.

Army nomination of Lt. Gen. William B. Garrett III, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Herbert R. McMaster, Jr., to be Lieutenant General.

Army nomination of Col. Robert D. Tenhet, to be Brigadier General.

Army nomination of Col. Bertram C. Providence, to be Brigadier General.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Bennet S. Sacolick, to be Lieutenant General.

*Navy nomination of Vice Adm. Michael S. Rogers, to be Admiral.

Navy nomination of Vice Adm. John W. Miller, to be Vice Admiral.

Navy nomination of Capt. David A. Lane, to be Rear Admiral (lower half).

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Brig. Gen. Brian D. Beaudreault and ending with Brig. Gen. Gary L. Thomas, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 24, 2014.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, for the Committee on Armed Services I report favorably the following nomination lists which were printed in the RECORDS on the dates indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that these nominations lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Air Force nomination of Darvin E. Winters, Jr., to be Major.

Air Force nominations beginning with Bruce E. Sternke and ending with Elizabeth M. F. Libao, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 26, 2014.

Air Force nomination of Jose A. Sanchez, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Jeffrey A. Uherka, to be Major.

Army nomination of Steven K. White, to be Major.

Army nominations beginning with Daniel B. Thompson and ending with Todd A. Morris, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 26, 2014.

Army nominations beginning with Peter P. Aleria and ending with Shay L. D. Worthy, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 10, 2014.

Marine Corps nomination of Jason K. Fettig, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of Michelle A. Rakers, to be Major.

Navy nomination of Ogwo U. Ogwo, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nomination of William Rabchenia, to be Captain.

Navy nominations beginning with Matthew M. Anthony and ending with Thomas A. Williams, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 26, 2014.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. MARKEY:

S. 2158. A bill to amend the Federal Power Act to protect the bulk-power system and electric infrastructure critical to the defense of the United States against cybersecurity and physical and other threats and vulnerabilities; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. GRAHAM (for himself, Mr. LEE, Ms. AYOTTE, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 2159. A bill to restore long-standing United States policy that the Wire Act prohibits all forms of Internet gambling, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. HOEVEN (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. BARRASSO, and Ms. HEITKAMP):

S. 2160. A bill to amend the Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act to require background checks before foster care placements are ordered in tribal court proceedings, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. INHOFE (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. VITTER, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. COATS, Mr. COBURN, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. FLAKE, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin, Mr. MORAN, Mr. RISC, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. ENZI, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. LEE, Mr. JOHANNES, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. WICKER, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BURR, and Mr. GRAHAM):

S. 2161. A bill to prohibit the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency from issuing any final rule under the Clean Air Act until the date on which the Administrator improves certain employment effect analyses under that Act; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Mr. REED, and Mr. BROWN):

S. 2162. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to establish a deduction for married couples who are both employed and have young children and to increase the earned income tax credit for childless workers, and to provide for budget offsets; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. UDALL of Colorado (for himself and Mr. BENNET):

S. 2163. A bill to establish an emergency watershed protection disaster assistance fund to be available to the Secretary of Agriculture to provide assistance for any natural disaster; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. CORNYN:

S. Res. 399. A resolution expressing support for the American GI Forum; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 313

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 313, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the tax treatment of ABLE accounts established under State programs for the care of family members with disabilities, and for other purposes.

S. 403

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 403, a bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to address and take action to prevent bullying and harassment of students.

S. 635

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) were added as cosponsors of S. 635, a bill to amend the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act to provide an exception to the annual written privacy notice requirement.

S. 862

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 862, a bill to amend section 5000A of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an additional religious exemption from the individual health coverage mandate.

S. 890

At the request of Mr. PAUL, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 890, a bill to clarify the definition of navigable waters, and for other purposes.

S. 1066

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1066, a bill to allow certain student loan borrowers to refinance Federal student loans.

S. 1088

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1088, a bill to end discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity in public schools, and for other purposes.

S. 1174

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1174, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers.

S. 1336

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1336, a bill to amend the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to permit States to require proof of citizenship for registration to vote in elections for Federal office.

S. 1468

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the names of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) were added as cosponsors of S. 1468, a bill to require the Secretary of Commerce to establish the Network for Manufacturing Innovation and for other purposes.

S. 1476

At the request of Mr. REED, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1476, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the denial of deduction for certain excessive employee remuneration, and for other purposes.

S. 1507

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1507, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to clarify the treatment of general welfare benefits provided by Indian tribes.

S. 1555

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1555, a bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to provide for a delay in the implementation schedule of the reductions in disproportionate share hospital payments, and for other purposes.

S. 1729

At the request of Mr. BEGICH, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU), the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1729, a bill to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to provide further options with respect to levels of coverage under qualified health plans.

S. 1767

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1767, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to require gas pipeline facilities to accelerate the repair, rehabilitation, and replacement of high-risk pipelines used in commerce, and for other purposes.

S. 1768

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1768, a bill to establish State revolving loan funds to repair or replace natural gas distribution pipelines.

S. 1799

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1799, a bill to reauthorize subtitle A of the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990.

S. 1823

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1823, a bill to amend part E of title IV of the Social Security Act to better enable State child welfare agencies to prevent human trafficking of children and serve the needs of children who are victims of human trafficking, and for other purposes.

S. 1862

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin

(Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1862, a bill to grant the Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the Monuments Men, in recognition of their heroic role in the preservation, protection, and restitution of monuments, works of art, and artifacts of cultural importance during and following World War II.

S. 2037

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2037, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to remove the 96-hour physician certification requirement for inpatient critical access hospital services.

S. 2075

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the names of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) were added as cosponsors of S. 2075, a bill to prohibit a reduction in funding for the defense commissary system in fiscal year 2015 pending the report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

S. 2082

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2082, a bill to provide for the development of criteria under the Medicare program for medically necessary short inpatient hospital stays, and for other purposes.

S. 2091

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2091, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the processing by the Department of Veterans Affairs of claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 2103

At the request of Mr. BOOZMAN, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2103, a bill to direct the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration to issue or revise regulations with respect to the medical certification of certain small aircraft pilots, and for other purposes.

S. 2125

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2125, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to ensure the integrity of voice communications and to prevent unjust or unreasonable discrimination among areas of the United States in the delivery of such communications.

S. 2140

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2140, a bill to improve the

transition between experimental permits and commercial licenses for commercial reusable launch vehicles.

S. 2153

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. JOHANNES), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McCONNELL), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2153, a bill to establish a National Regulatory Budget, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 17

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, his name was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 17, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.

S. RES. 384

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 384, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate concerning the humanitarian crisis in Syria and neighboring countries, resulting humanitarian and development challenges, and the urgent need for a political solution to the crisis.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Mr. REED, and Mr. BROWN):

S. 2162. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to establish a deduction for married couples who are both employed and have young children and to increase the earned income tax credit for childless workers, and to provide for budget offsets; to the Committee on Finance.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, our workforce has changed a lot in the last few decades. Thirty years ago the majority of families with children had only one parent working outside the home. More of the country's low-wage workers were teenagers earning some extra spending money. Today two-thirds of families with children rely on earnings from both parents, and millions of low-wage workers in our country are far less likely to be teens supplementing their allowance and far more likely to be adults struggling to support their families. It has also gotten a lot harder for young people just starting out to find work that puts them on a strong path. There is a very concerning pattern of young people dropping out of the labor force rather than keeping up their search.

These are the kinds of trends we need to be thinking about as we look for

ways to help today's workforce succeed in today's economy. There are many steps we can and absolutely should take to tackle the barriers our workers and our families are facing. We should start with raising the minimum wage because no one working full time in the United States today should live in poverty. Low-wage workers in today's economy, who are putting in very long hours while raising their children, paying taxes, and trying to pay the bills, deserve a better shot at success.

But that is not the last step we should take. As we are looking for ways to expand opportunity for struggling workers and families, we should be using every tool in the box—including our Tax Code. Policies such as the earned-income tax credit have succeeded in helping millions of households lift themselves out of poverty, which is why Republicans and Democrats have come together to strengthen the EITC so many times in the past. But today too many struggling workers and families are left behind under our outdated Tax Code.

It is time to build on these efforts to support work, including the critical expansions of the EITC in 2009, which should be made permanent, and we need to update our Tax Code so that it reflects the needs of today's workforce.

I am proud to be here today to introduce the 21st Century Worker Tax Cut Act. It is a bill that would complement critical reforms, such as raising the minimum wage, by providing targeted tax cuts designed for today's workforce. It is paid for by closing wasteful loopholes that both Democrats and Republicans have proposed eliminating.

The 21st Century Worker Tax Cut Act would put in place a new tax deduction to help struggling families with two workers keep more of what they earn. The way our Tax Code is currently structured, the second earner in a household often pays a higher tax rate on his or her earnings. Making matters worse, when a second earner decides to enter the workforce, the family usually faces many new costs, such as childcare or transportation, and the family can lose eligibility for credits, such as the EITC and other benefits.

Add it all up, and many struggling two-earner families today end up taking home a smaller percentage of their paycheck than many of the wealthiest households in America. These realities often discourage a potential second earner, such as a mother who is considering reentering the workforce to return to her professional career.

Struggling families face a lot of challenges to getting ahead today. The very least we can do is keep our Tax Code from forcing families to take a half step backward for every step forward, and that is exactly the problem the 21st Century Worker Tax Cut Act will help to solve.

This bill will give our working families a 20-percent deduction on the second earner's income. A mom or dad who goes back into the workforce and

brings home an extra \$25,000, for example, would get a \$5,000 deduction. For a family in the 25-percent bracket, that means \$1,250 back in their pocket for groceries, childcare, transportation, or retirement savings.

The bill also reflects the reality that workers without dependent children and young workers who are just starting out are being left behind under the current EITC. My colleague Senator BROWN has been a leader on this issue. He is a cosponsor of the bill I am introducing today.

Unlike low-income workers with kids at home, workers without dependent children receive little or nothing from this credit. As workers file their 2013 tax returns this spring, a single worker with no dependent children is eligible for a maximum credit of only \$487. She is entirely phased out of the credit once her income reaches \$14,340, which is about what a full-time minimum wage worker would earn in a year. Young, childless workers under 25, who are starting out in a tough labor market, are not eligible at all. In an economy today where more low-wage earners are middle-aged and where young people are struggling to gain a toehold in the job market, it doesn't make any sense.

Our bill, the 21st Century Worker Tax Cut Act, would increase the EITC for workers without dependent children to about \$1,400 next year and expand the income range over which workers are eligible for the credit. It would also lower the eligibility age for the childless worker to qualify for the EITC from 25 years old to 21 so that young workers without dependents get the same incentives that have helped so many others get on their feet. The Treasury Department estimated that EITC changes similar to these would help more than 13 million struggling workers climb the economic ladder.

As we expand the EITC, we have a responsibility to do everything we can to make sure this credit is going straight to the workers and families who need it, and part of that responsibility is to make sure that the EITC claims are filed correctly. Professional tax return preparers complete 70 percent of these EITC claims. Under our bill, the 21st Century Worker Tax Cut, they would receive twice the current penalty if they don't follow due diligence requirements put in place by the IRS.

Workers and families are playing fair, and the biggest corporations should too, and that is why this bill would be paid for by closing loopholes that the biggest corporations take advantage of. The 21st Century Worker Tax Cut would draw on a proposal from my colleague Senator REED of Rhode Island, who is also a cosponsor of this bill. His proposal closes a loophole that lets corporations claim outsized tax breaks by paying their executives stock options instead of regular paychecks. This bill would also stop multinational corporations from shifting profits into tax havens such as Ber-

muda and the Cayman Islands to avoid paying their fair share.

There is bipartisan support for closing those loopholes. Both Democrats and House Ways and Means chairman DAVE CAMP have proposed eliminating each of them. Updating our Tax Code to give tax breaks to our struggling workers instead of big corporations is the right thing to do.

As we continue this important debate about how to expand opportunity to those who are struggling today, we need to make sure we are giving today's workforce the best shot in today's economy. We should increase our outdated minimum wage to give millions of workers a raise, and then Democrats and Republicans need to come together to update our Tax Code and give today's struggling workers the tax relief they deserve. The 21st Century Worker Tax Cut would be a strong, fiscally responsible step toward that bipartisan goal, and I am hopeful we can get this done for our workers as quickly as possible.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 399—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE AMERICAN GI FORUM

Mr. CORNYN submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

S. RES. 399

Whereas millions of Hispanic veterans returning home from World War II were segregated from other veterans groups and wrongfully denied services by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs;

Whereas in response to such inequities, Hector P. Garcia, a United States Army veteran and physician from Corpus Christi, Texas, founded the American GI Forum (AGIF) on March 26, 1948;

Whereas the motto of AGIF is "Education is our Freedom and Freedom Should be Everybody's Business";

Whereas in 1998, AGIF was granted a Federal charter pursuant to an Act of Congress (Public Law 105-231);

Whereas one of the purposes stated in the AGIF charter is "fostering and enlarging equal educational opportunities, equal economic opportunities, equal justice under the law, and equal political opportunities for all United States citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin";

Whereas the flagship Veterans Service Center of the AGIF National Veterans Outreach Program is based in San Antonio, Texas, and provides a "continuum of care" to veterans in need, including employment training, counseling, and a homeless veterans reintegration program;

Whereas the AGIF Residential Center for Homeless Veterans has 80 transitional beds and 60 single-room apartments dedicated to the needs of our Nation's homeless veterans;

Whereas AGIF is now the largest Federally-chartered Hispanic veterans organization in the United States, with chapters in 40 States and Puerto Rico; and

Whereas AGIF continues to be a beacon of hope and an avenue for community involvement for returning veterans: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports and commends the mission, goals, and ideals of the American GI Forum and its members; and

(2) encourages others to join with the American GI Forum to ensure that veterans are never again denied the benefits they have earned through their service.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2869. Mr. TOOMEY (for himself and Mr. PRYOR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2867 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. CORKER)) to the bill H.R. 4152, to provide for the costs of loan guarantees for Ukraine; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2870. Mr. WYDEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2867 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. CORKER)) to the bill H.R. 4152, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2869. Mr. TOOMEY (for himself and Mr. PRYOR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2867 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. CORKER)) to the bill H.R. 4152, to provide for the costs of loan guarantees for Ukraine; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 7 of the amendment, after line 25, add the following:

(C) **USE OF LOAN GUARANTEES TO ENHANCE NUCLEAR ENERGY SECURITY AND INDEPENDENCE.**—Loans for which loan guarantees are provided pursuant to subsection (a) may be used by the Government of Ukraine or nuclear power utilities in Ukraine to purchase nuclear fuel from private sector sources and to make other investments to enhance the nuclear energy security and independence of Ukraine.

SA 2870. Mr. WYDEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2867 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. CORKER)) to the bill H.R. 4152, to provide for the costs of loan guarantees for Ukraine; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of the amendment, add the following:

SEC. 11. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR UNCONVENTIONAL GAS TECHNICAL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR ENGAGEMENT IN EASTERN EUROPE.

From amounts made available to carry out chapter 4 of part II of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2346 et seq.; relating to the Economic Support Fund), there are authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 and each fiscal year thereafter \$10,000,000 to the Secretary of State for the Unconventional Gas Technical Engagement Program of the Department of State, to be used for engagement on the utilization and development of natural gas resources by foreign countries, with particular emphasis on countries in eastern Europe.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on

Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, at 2:30 p.m. in room SR-253 of the Russell Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled, "Protecting Personal Consumer Information from Cyber Attacks and Data Breaches."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014 at 10 a.m., in room SD-406 of the Dirksen Senate office building, to conduct a hearing entitled, "Oversight Hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, at 2:30 p.m., to hold a hearing entitled "Syria After Geneva: Next Steps for U.S. Policy."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled "Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships to Reduce Cyber Risks to Our Nation's Critical Infrastructure."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, in room SD-628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "The President's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget for Tribal Programs."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on March 26, 2014, at 10 a.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Reauthorization of the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, at 10 a.m. in room SD-

G50 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on Aging be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, in room SD-562 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building at 1:45 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Preventing Medicare Fraud: How Can We Best Protect Seniors and Taxpayers?"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Protection be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Are Alternative Financial Products Serving Consumers?"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, at 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, at 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 26, 2014, at 10 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMERICAN FIGHTER ACES CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1827 and the Senate proceed to its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1827) to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the American Fighter Aces, collectively, in recognition of their heroic military service and defense of our country's

freedom throughout the history of aviation warfare.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the bill be read three times and passed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid on the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 1827) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 1827

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “American Fighter Aces Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) An American Fighter Ace is a fighter pilot who has served honorably in a United States military service and who has destroyed 5 or more confirmed enemy aircraft in aerial combat during a war or conflict in which American armed forces have participated.

(2) Beginning with World War I, and the first use of airplanes in warfare, military services have maintained official records of individual aerial victory credits during every major conflict. Of more than 60,000 United States military fighter pilots that have taken to the air, less than 1,500 have become Fighter Aces.

(3) Americans became Fighter Aces in the Spanish Civil War, Sino-Japanese War, Russian Civil War, Arab-Israeli War, and others. Additionally, American military groups recruited United States military pilots to form the American Volunteer Group, Eagle Squadron, and others that produced American-born Fighter Aces fighting against axis powers prior to Pearl Harbor.

(4) The concept of a Fighter Ace is that they fought for freedom and democracy across the globe, flying in the face of the enemy to defend freedom throughout the history of aerial combat. American-born citizens became Fighter Aces flying under the flag of United States allied countries and became some of the highest scoring Fighter Aces of their respective wars.

(5) American Fighter Aces hail from every State in the Union, representing numerous ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

(6) Fighter Aces possess unique skills that have made them successful in aerial combat. These include courage, judgment, keen marksmanship, concentration, drive, persistence, and split-second thinking that makes an Ace a war fighter with unique and valuable flight driven skills.

(7) The Aces’ training, bravery, skills, sacrifice, attention to duty, and innovative spirit illustrate the most celebrated traits of the United States military, including service to country and the protection of freedom and democracy.

(8) American Fighter Aces have led distinguished careers in the military, education, private enterprise, and politics. Many have held the rank of General or Admiral and played leadership roles in multiple war efforts from WWI to Vietnam through many decades. In some cases they became the highest ranking officers for following wars.

(9) The extraordinary heroism of the American Fighter Ace boosted American morale at home and encouraged many men and

women to enlist to fight for America and democracy across the globe.

(10) Fighter Aces were among America’s most-prized military fighters during wars. When they rotated back to the United States after combat tours, they trained cadets in fighter pilot tactics that they had learned over enemy skies. The teaching of combat dogfighting to young aviators strengthened our fighter pilots to become more successful in the skies. The net effect of this was to shorten wars and save the lives of young Americans.

(11) Following military service, many Fighter Aces became test pilots due to their superior flying skills and quick thinking abilities.

(12) The American Fighter Aces are one of the most decorated military groups in American history. Twenty-two Fighter Aces have achieved the rank of Admiral in the Navy. Seventy-nine Fighter Aces have achieved the rank of General in the Army, Marines, and Air Force. Nineteen Medals of Honor have been awarded to individual Fighter Aces.

SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of a gold medal of appropriate design to the American Fighter Aces, collectively, in recognition of their heroic military service and defense of our country’s freedom, which has spanned the history of aviation warfare.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury (in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”) shall strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

(c) AWARD OF MEDAL.—Following the award of the gold medal in honor of the American Fighter Aces under subsection (a), the gold medal shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where it shall be available for display or temporary loan to be displayed elsewhere, particularly at appropriate locations associated with the American Fighter Aces, and that preference should be given to locations affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution.

SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3, at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medal, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses, and amounts received from the sale of such duplicates shall be deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise Fund.

SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.

(a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck under this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

(b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

2014 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the commerce committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 387.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 387) celebrating the 2014 Arctic Winter Games, in Fairbanks, Alaska.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 387) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of March 13, 2014, under “Submitted Resolutions”.)

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2014

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Thursday, March 27, 2014; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that following any leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each and the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half; and that following morning business, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 4152, the Ukraine bill; that notwithstanding the previous order, the time until noon be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees and all other provisions of the previous order remain in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. There will be a series of rollcall votes at noon tomorrow. Additional votes are possible during tomorrow’s session. Senators will be notified when they are scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:18 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 27, 2014, at 9:30 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate March 26, 2014:

THE JUDICIARY

CHRISTOPHER REID COOPER, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

M. DOUGLAS HARPOOL, OF MISSOURI, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI.

GERALD AUSTIN MCHUGH, JR., OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA.

EDWARD G. SMITH, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

JOSEPH WILLIAM WESTPHAL, OF NEW YORK, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA.